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CATECHETICAL PREPARATIONS

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PART II

**THE CREED**

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*By F. W. C. JESSE*

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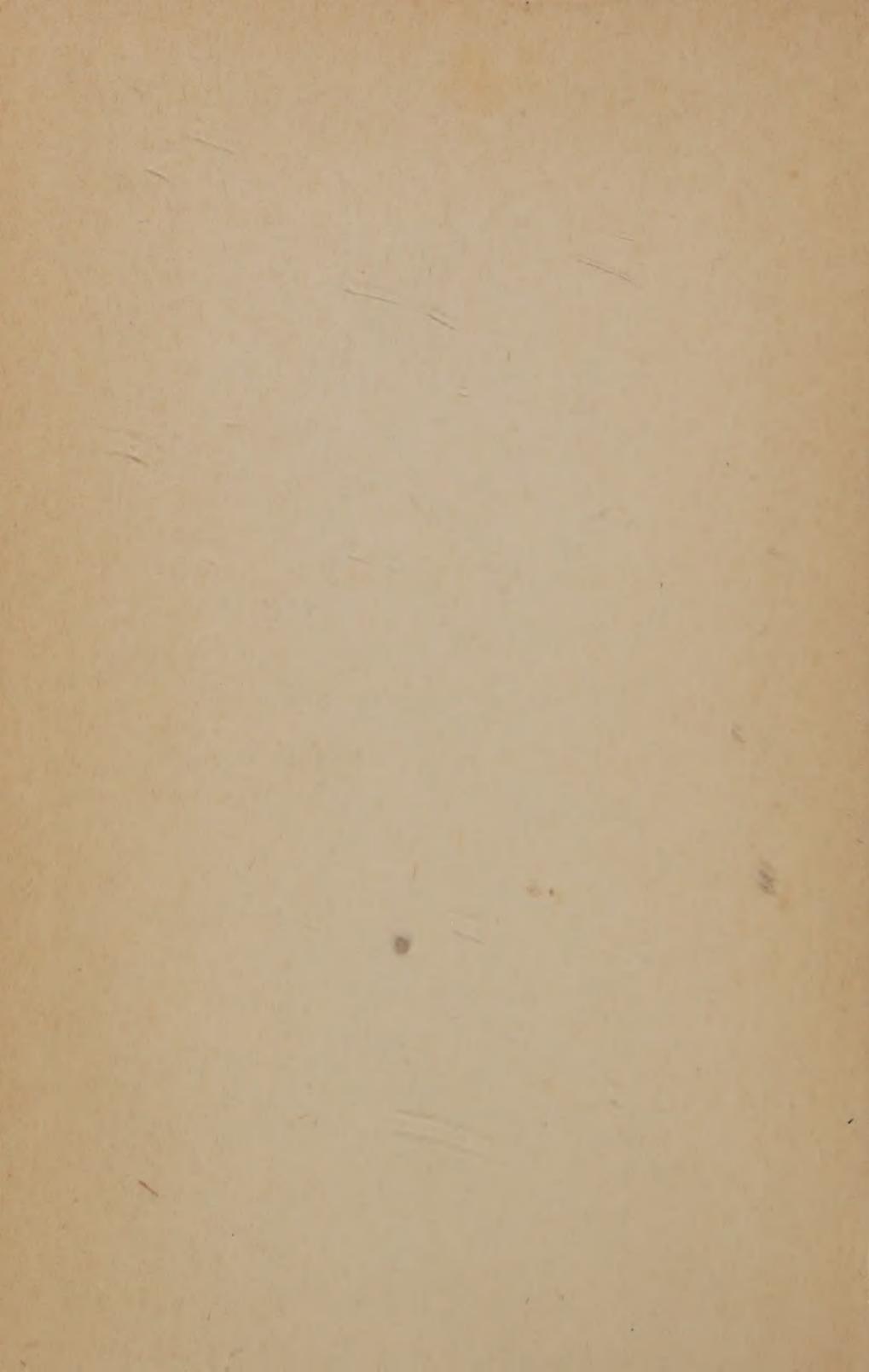
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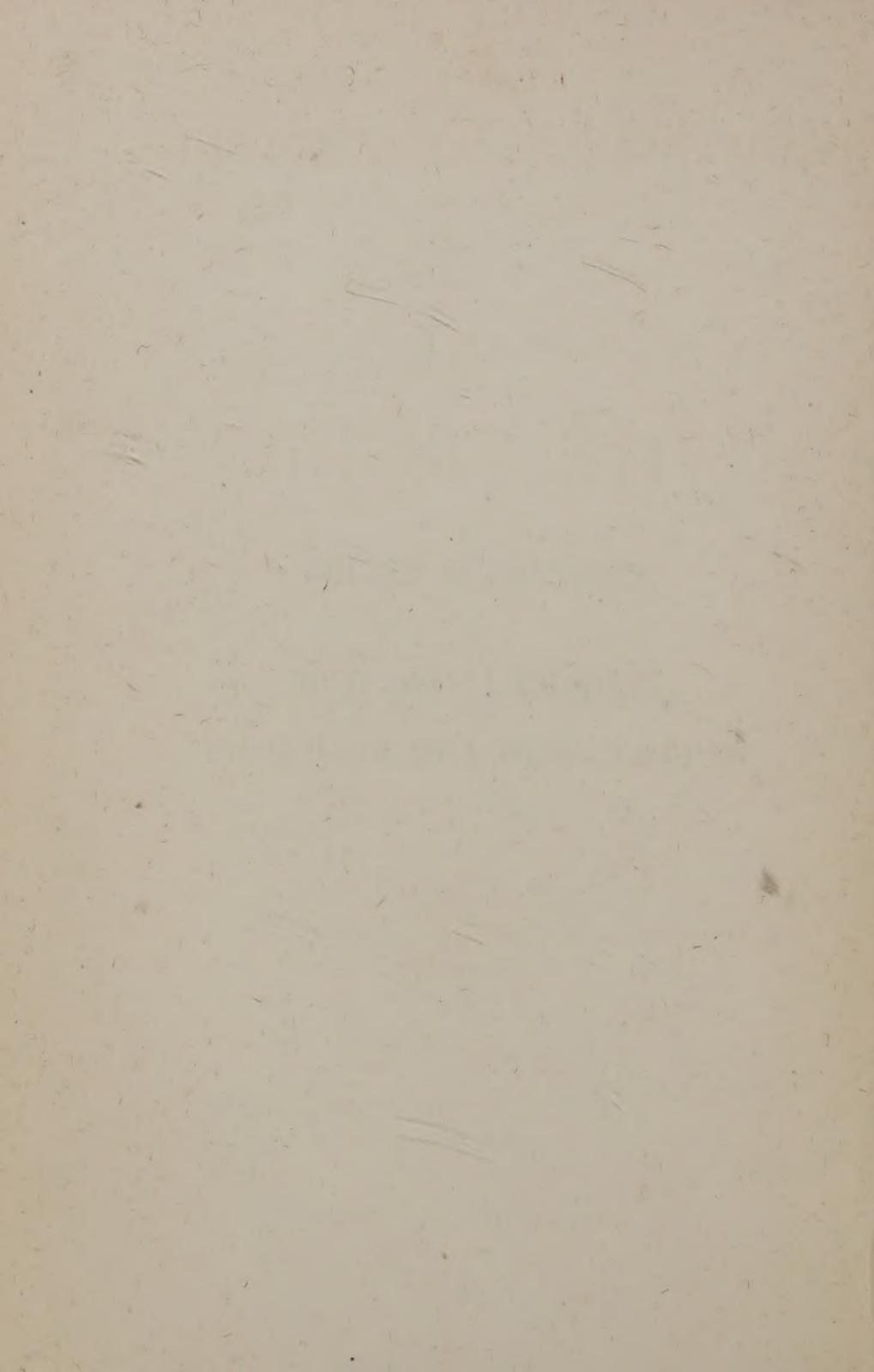
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# Catechetical Preparations.

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## PART II.

# THE CREED.

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By Rev. Prof. F. W. C. JESSE,  
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## The Second Chief Part.

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Superscription. Qu. 98—101.

INTRODUCTION.—From the First Chief Part of the Catechism we have learned to know the Law of God, wherein “God tells us how we are to be and what we are to do or not to do.” Qu. 7. We have also heard for what purposes God has given the Law to man even after the Fall. Qu. 91. It is to serve as a *curb* for the ungodly, lest open shame and crime run riot upon earth. This use of the Law has bearing only upon the relation of man toward man upon earth. The other two purposes of the Law affect the relation of man toward God.

The Law is to serve as a *mirror*. It is to show man that he is sinful and unclean, and that in the sight of God he has deserved nothing but “His wrath and displeasure, temporal death, and eternal damnation.” Christian Questions, 4. But having shown us our sins, the Law can do nothing toward helping us; it shows us no way of escape from the wrath and punishment of God.

To the children of God the Law is to serve also as a *rule*; it is to show them what are truly good works—works by the performance of which they can please God. But, alas! having shown them what pleases God, it cannot give them the strength and ability to perform such works.

However, God has made provision for bestowing upon man that help and strength which the Law fails to supply. He has prepared a way of escape from the curse of sin, and a source of strength to walk according to the precepts of the Law. Such deliverance and strength are given through another doctrine of the Bible, *viz.*, through the Gospel, which is taught in the Second Chief Part of the Small Catechism. Large Catechism, 449, 1—4.

The superscription of the Second Chief Part reads: “The Creed, as the Head of the Family should Teach It in All Simplicity to His Household.” Thus, having taught his household the First Chief Part, the head of the family should teach them also the Second. This is necessary in order that they may be truly benefited unto eternal life by that which they have learned from the Ten Commandments. And that which they are to be taught, the Second Chief Part, is called

## THE CREED.

## I. What Is the Creed? Qu. 98.

a. The word "creed" is the principal word in the superscription, or heading, of the Second Chief Part. The superscription, however, should be—and, in this case, is—the summary of the contents of the document in question. It tells us what is contained in the Second Chief Part.—The word "creed" is derived from the Latin *credo*. This is the first word in the Latin version of the Creed, and means "I believe." Hence, the Creed is the "I believe" of the speaker; it tells us what he believes, what his *faith* is. His faith, indeed, is found in his heart, and cannot be seen by man. But it is the will of God that we should *confess* what we believe with our hearts. Rom. 10, 10. And that is precisely what is done in the Creed. Hence, the Creed is the "confession . . . of faith."—The faith which is here confessed is not the statement of opinions which man has formed by his own knowledge, or acquired by his own experience. It is rather the statement of truths which the heart has accepted because the Word of God teaches them. And since it is *taught* by the Word of God, it is called the "*doctrine of faith*"; for "*doctrine*" is that which is taught.

Hence, the Creed "is the confession or doctrine of faith." Qu. 98.

b. This doctrine, as we have heard, is taken from the Bible. However, the Bible is a very large book. And the doctrine of faith is taught therein in great detail, and explained at great length. In the Creed, however, what the Bible teaches is gathered together so as to be *comprehended*, entirely included, in a few sentences.

c. Since a creed is a confession of faith, every statement of faith may be called "*a creed*." But the statement which forms the Second Chief Part is called "*the Creed*," because it is that confession of the Christian faith which is now, and has been heretofore, the most widely known and accepted of all Christian creeds, dating back, according to its first beginnings, to the earliest years of Christianity, and being now used as the confession at Baptism, confirmation, etc., throughout Christendom. By its fuller name it is known as the "*Apostles' Creed*." This name is not applied because the apostles have formulated it, but partly because, in a shorter form, it was used as early as in the days of the apostles, and partly because it confesses the doctrine of the apostles.

Thus "*the Creed*" "is the confession or doctrine of faith as it is comprehended in the Apostles' Creed." Qu. 98.

**II. Whence Doctrine of Creed is Derived. Qu. 99. 100.**

a. We have already heard that the doctrine which is confessed in the Creed was taken from the Word of God. The Law, which we have learned to know from the First Chief Part, is also taken from the Bible. Yet the Law did not speak of any of those things which are taught in the Creed. This is due to the fact that the Law is only one of the two distinct doctrines of the Bible, whereas what the Creed teaches is contained in that doctrine which is entirely distinct from the Law. The doctrine from which the Creed is taken is the Gospel.

Hence we find the doctrine of the Creed "*in the Gospel.*" Qu. 99.

b. 1. What, then, is the Gospel? The word "Gospel" is derived from the Old English "godspel," or "good-spell" (spell = to tell), and means "a good tale, good news, good tidings." The Gospel, therefore, is "good tidings," or, as we say more commonly, "glad tidings." Qu. 100.

2. The reason why this doctrine is called "good news," "glad tidings," will become evident if we consider the short summary of the Gospel as we find it in John 3, 16. There we are told that God loved the world. The "world" includes us; for it is composed of all mankind. We and all other men are, as we have seen from the First Chief Part, "by nature sinful and unclean" and have also "sinned against" God "by thought, word, and deed." Thus by original and actual sin we have provoked God to anger, and should have been lost forever. Yet God loved the world; He loved us. This is the news, the tidings, which constitutes the Gospel. It is the glad tidings of the love of God. The Bible often uses the word "grace" for "love." Hence we call the Gospel "*the glad tidings of the grace of God.*" Qu. 100.

3. John 3, 16 also tells us what the love of God desired. It was His will that they whom He loved, that is, the world, "should not perish, but have everlasting life." Notwithstanding the fact that they had deserved eternal punishment, He longed to take them unto Himself in heaven.—However, God is a just God. He had said that none should ever enter heaven who had not fulfilled the Law. He had said that every one who transgressed His commandments must perish. And according to His justice He must act in accordance with His words. The Law must be fulfilled, and the punishment for sin must be borne, or else none could be saved. And since we could not fulfil the Law, nor yet fully suffer the punishment for our sins, it was necessary that another should do for us what we could never accomplish.

And he who would do it for us must be more than mere man; for man could never do it. He must be God. Hence it was necessary that the Son of God Himself should become man in order that, as our substitute, He might fulfil the Law and suffer the punishment for our sins. Man's salvation required a sacrifice at the hands of God, which man could not ask or expect of Him. Yet, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son," who by His obedience to the Law and by His suffering in our stead has made it possible for God to take us unto Himself in heaven. And now the Gospel is the glad tidings that God has done all this for us, and that "whosoever believeth on" Christ "should not perish, but have everlasting life." And because the Gospel tells us that God has revealed His love, His grace, toward us in sending His Son to save us, it is called "the glad tidings of the grace of God *in Christ Jesus.*" Qu. 100.

4. But the Gospel of Christ is not like a message of man, which may bring the joyful news of a happy occurrence, or of a great benefit which has been placed at our disposal, but which commits the securing of that benefit to our own resources and strength. In Rom. 1, 16 we are told that "the Gospel of Christ . . . is the *power of God unto salvation* to every one that believeth." For it does not merely tell of the salvation which God has prepared for us in Christ; it *brings* it unto us. And having brought it, it furthermore works in our hearts the faith whereby we accept it. Thus "every one that believeth" is saved by "the power of God," the power of the Gospel.

Thus we have seen that the Gospel "*is the glad tidings of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.*" Qu. 100.

We have now discussed the two doctrines of the Bible, the Law and the Gospel. Both agree in this, that they have been given by God Himself. Both have, furthermore, been revealed to us for the purpose of promoting our salvation. And yet they differ essentially one from the other, so that neither may or must be employed to accomplish what is clearly within the province of the other. In order, then, that we may learn to employ each within its own proper sphere, it will be profitable to answer the question:—

### III. What Difference Is there between the Law and the Gospel? Qu. 101.

a. The Law is expressed in the Ten Commandments. These say, "Thou shalt," "Thou shalt not." They do not speak of God's work for man; they inform man as to what his duties are toward God. "The Law teaches what WE are

*to do and not to do.”* Qu. 101, 1.—The Gospel, on the other hand, makes no demands upon man; it does not speak of man’s works or duties. It rather speaks of the work of God’s love in preparing salvation for man in Christ. “*The Gospel teaches what God has done and still does for our salvation.*” Qu. 101, 1.

(NOTE.—This is the fundamental and essential difference between the Law and the Gospel, wherein all the other points here to be enumerated are included. Hence this point is to be emphasized above all others.)

b. The Law “tells us how we are to be and what we are to do or not to do.” Qu. 7. But if we examine ourselves and our acts according to the Law, we find that we are not as the Law would have us be, and that our acts are not in harmony with the holy will of God. Hence, the Law *shows us our sin.* And not our sin only; it shows us also the result of our transgressions. It tells us that God, in His holiness, must be *offended*, and, in His justice, must be *angry* with our deviation from His Law.—Hence, “*the Law shows us our sin and the wrath of God.*” Qu. 101, 2.—The Gospel, however, does not subject us to examination and search. It does not deal with *man*, with man’s acts or condition, at all. It holds up to our view the *Savior*, the righteousness which He has won for us, and the *love of God*, who for Christ’s sake throws open the doors of heaven to us without demanding payment or reward at our hands. “*The Gospel shows us our Savior and the grace of God.*” Qu. 101, 2.

c. Saying, “Thou shalt,” and, “Thou shalt not,” the Law makes *demands*. It tells us that punishment will be visited upon us if we do not comply with its requirements; it *threatens*. And inasmuch as we are found to have transgressed its commandments times without number, it passes judgment upon us; it *condemns*. Thus, “*the Law demands, threatens, and condemns.*” Qu. 101, 3.—The Gospel, contrariwise, makes no demands, but finding us unable to satisfy the demands of the Law, it offers to give us the righteousness which we need before the throne of justice. It offers to take away our sins, death, and damnation, and in their stead to give unto us forgiveness, life, and salvation. It makes *promises*. More than this; it brings and *gives* that which it promises. And if man’s timid heart hardly dares rely on such great promises, it assures time and again, it *seals* unto us what has been promised. Thus, “*the Gospel promises, gives, and seals unto us forgiveness, life, and salvation.*” Qu. 101, 3.

d. The Law convicts man of sin, and shows him the

wrath and punishment of God, which he has deserved by his sins. However, man as he is constituted by nature loves sin and is unwilling to depart from it. And when he finds that sin exposes him to the temporal and eternal punishment of God, he is filled with wrath against his Maker. Thus "*the Law worketh wrath.*" Rom. 4, 15. It does not and cannot make man better. But because man is evil, he rather takes occasion by the Law to offend God the more. The Law cannot give spiritual life; "*the letter [of the Law] killeth.*" 2 Cor. 3, 6.—Hence, "*the Law works wrath and kills.*" Qu. 101, 4.—The Gospel, however, has an opposite effect upon the sinner. It does not speak of the wrath and punishment, but rather shows to man the love and mercy of God. It promises full and free forgiveness, and eternal bliss and happiness. It reveals Christ as the source of all true and everlasting joys. By these glorious promises it *invites* man to come unto Christ. By its power it *draws* him. Yea, being the power of God, it *works faith* in him; it gives unto him *spiritual life*.—Thus, "*The Gospel invites and draws us to Christ, works faith, and thus gives us eternal life.*" Qu. 101, 4.

e. As the Law and the Gospel differ from each other in their contents and in their effect upon man, so they differ also in their proper application. We know that the most important use of the Law consists in this, that we employ it as a mirror, which shows us our sins and iniquities, in order that, having come to a knowledge of our sins, we may be willing to accept the grace which is offered us in the Gospel. From this it follows that the Law, and the Law only, must be used whenever we deal with such as do not yet know and believe that they are under the curse, but who feel safe and secure because they either do not believe that they are sinners or else do not believe that their sins truly subject them to the eternal wrath of God. These must first learn to "look with terror" at their sins before they are properly prepared for the Gospel. Hence, "*the Law must be preached unto secure sinners.*" Qu. 101, 5.—But when man has learned to know his sins, when he sees how grievously he has offended God, when he sees that he has deserved eternal damnation, and realizes that he is lost,—yea, as far as his own strength is concerned, hopelessly lost,—and hence alarm and terror fill his heart, the Law can afford him no help. Then the Gospel must be preached to him. For the Gospel then shows him that in Christ there is forgiveness for all his sins, and gives strength to lay hold of the salvation which God's grace offers in his Savior. Thus "*the Gospel*" must be preached "*to such as are alarmed and terrified.*" Qu. 101, 5.

**CONCLUSION.**—Thus we see that, while the Law of God is good, and holy, and necessary, inasmuch as it uncovers all the sores of sin, it is the Gospel which alone offers balm and healing for the soul, and which alone can restore unto us true peace of heart in the firm hope of eternal glory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore let us love and treasure the Gospel and never be ashamed of it, but freely confess it even before the fiercest enemies of the Cross of Christ.

**INTRODUCTORY WORDS OF THE CREED:**

**“I BELIEVE IN GOD.”**

(Qu. 102. 104—108.)

**A. “What Is God?” Qu. 104.**

**INTRODUCTION.**—The Creed “is the confession . . . of faith,” Qu. 98, wherein we give expression to that which we believe concerning God. Hence, it properly begins with the words, “I believe in God.” These words do not belong to the First Article only, but to the entire Creed. They are, as it were, the superscription, briefly stating what is the sum of all that is contained in the entire confession. And the three Articles are subdivisions of this one theme, each one dealing especially with one person of the Godhead. (First Article: “*I believe in God the Father*”; Second Article: “*I believe in God the Son*”; Third Article: “*I believe in God the Holy Ghost*.”) Since, then, the entire Creed treats of God, we properly ask, first of all:—

**“WHAT IS GOD?” Qu. 104.**

**I. What does Revelation Teach concerning God?**

a. In John 4, 24 we read, “God is a spirit.” What the Bible means by “a spirit” is seen from the words of Christ in another place. Luke 24, 39. On the evening of Resurrection Day, while the disciples were assembled, Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst and spoke to them. “But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.” V. 37. In order to convince them that He was indeed the risen Lord, He said, “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.” V. 39. From this we learn, in the first place, that a spirit is a rational being. For Jesus had spoken unto them; and only beings possessed of reason enjoy the power of intelligent speech. But He does not use the fact that He had spoken

to prove that He was not a spirit. Hence speech, and therefore, reason, properly belong to a spirit. That which distinguishes a spirit is rather the fact that a spirit has no flesh and bones, no body. Hence, *a spirit is a rational being without a body.* — God, being a spirit, has no body. True, the Bible sometimes speaks of “the hand of God,” etc. This, however, is a figure of speech (anthropomorphism), and is used because the Word of God would speak in such terms that we may be able to understand what it means. But, never having seen a spirit, we cannot form a conception of one except under the image of some living being which we can see. — Since God has no body, He is of necessity invisible unto us in this life; only in the life after death will we be able to behold Him. — Thus “*God is a spirit,*” Qu. 104, that is, *a rational being without a body.*

God is not the only spirit of whom the Bible tells us. The angels also are spirits; and the soul of man is likewise called a spirit. Acts 7, 59. But all other spirits are neither gods, nor are they God’s equals. This will appear as we consider the attributes of God.

b. God is *eternal.* What is meant by this statement is seen from Ps. 90, 1, 2. God has been our “dwelling-place,” our shelter, and refuge, as a house offers shelter and protection. But every house has been built by men of some certain generation; and only since that time has it been a dwelling-place. But God has been a dwelling-place “in *all generations*”; there has never been a generation which has not found this dwelling-place in existence and ready to shelter them. Hence, He has been before man came into existence, “before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world.” He is “from everlasting to everlasting.” He *has always been and will always be.* — However, we note especially the word, “From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.” We do not read, “Thou *hast been* God,” but, “Thou *art* God.” As time has not seen His beginning and shall not see His ending, — He being without beginning or ending, — so time cannot affect Him or work any change in Him. He has not been young, neither shall He grow old. In Him there is and can be no change. *He is unchangeable.* Hence also the Psalmist says, “Thou art the same,” Ps. 102, 27. He has pointed to the earth and to the heavens with the statement, “They shall perish . . . ; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed.” V. 26. There is change and decay everywhere. “But Thou art the same.” God alone, being eternal, is of

necessity unchangeable.—All they who trust in Him have a secure dwelling-place, a Helper whose love and power to save are ever the same.

Thus God is *eternal*, that is, *He has always been, and always will be, and is unchangeable.* Qu. 104.

c. God is *omnipresent*. The word “omnipresent” is composed of “omni”—from the Latin *omnis*, meaning “all”—and “present.” It, therefore, signifies “all-present,” “ever-present,” “present in all places.” Of God’s omnipresence we read in Jer. 23, 23. 24. In order to convince Israel that He has heard the words of the lying prophets, v. 25, He points to the fact that He is a God who is “at hand,” that is “near,” and yet also “afar off”; that, therefore, none can hide himself from His presence. To show the utter futility of every attempt to shut oneself off from the presence of the Lord, He says, “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” As the water of the sea fills the whole basin, being present in all parts thereof at the same time, so God fills heaven and earth. Yea, in a fuller measure. For the entire sea is not in all places; but in each part of the basin we find but a part of the sea. But God is *present everywhere in His entirety*. And again, the water of the sea may in a certain place be displaced by a submerged impenetrable object (as, for example, by a submerged ball of glass), so that it surrounds that body, but itself is not where that body is. But unto God nothing is impenetrable. He is not only where there is nothing else; He is not excluded or displaced by any creature. He is present also where no other living being can penetrate. Thus, though man should be sunk in the deepest depth of the sea, God is there; and though man be buried a thousand feet beneath solid rock, or encased in solid metal, the Most High is still at his side.

Thus God is *omnipresent*, that is, *He is present everywhere at the same time*,—truly a fact which the evil-doer can contemplate only with utmost terror, yet a source of sweetest comfort to him whose fullest pleasure consists in communion with his God.

d. God is *omnipotent*. The word “omnipotent” is composed of “omni,” meaning “all,” and “potent,” meaning “mighty.” “God is omnipotent,” therefore, means, “God is almighty,” that is, He has all might, or all power; *He is able to do whatsoever He pleases.* This is taught in Luke 1, 37. Since God is almighty, no man can defy Him with impunity, as seen from the example of Pharaoh, Ex. 5, 1. 2; 12, 29—33; 14, 21—28; of Sennacherib, 2 Kings 19; and of Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 4, 29—33. On the other hand, He is

able to protect and deliver all those who put their trust in Him, as is evidenced by the example of the three men in the fiery furnace, Dan. 3, and of Daniel in the lions' den, Dan. 6.

e. God is *omniscient*. The word "omniscient" is composed of "omni," meaning "all," and "scient," which is derived from the same Latin root as "science" (knowledge) and means "knowing." "Omniscient," therefore, means "all-knowing," or "all-wise." In Ps. 139, 1—4, the Psalmist explains what is meant by this statement, "God is omniscient." The Lord has "searched" us. He has such intimate knowledge of us as though He had carefully examined every fiber, every thought, and every emotion within us, and every cause of and reason for the same, together with all our being and all our deeds. Hence He has not only such knowledge of all our acts and words as man also might obtain if he were always at our side. He knows "altogether" every word in our tongue; He knows not only what we say, but also what we mean to say, whether we speak with sincerity, what thoughts prompt the words, etc. He "understands" our thoughts. He does not only know them, but also knows the condition of the heart and the external reasons which prompt them. And He knows not only the thoughts which we are thinking at the present time. He knows our thoughts "afar off," that is, He understands every thought that has ever passed through our minds; and He knows every thought of ours that is yet "afar off" in the future.

Thus God is *omniscient*, that is, *He knows all things*.

Such knowledge of God must indeed fill with fear and trembling every one who considers of how much sin and evil within him God has knowledge, and should prompt every one of us to strive to walk before Him in purity and holiness, endeavoring ever to keep clean even the most hidden recesses of our hearts and our most secret thoughts. On the other hand, it can but give comfort to every one who, having been cleansed by the blood of Christ, is endeavoring to walk in the ways of God and to escape the snares of the devil. For to him it gives assurance that God knows his struggles and his weaknesses, and will, therefore, be able to guide, guard, and keep him in the way of life.

f. God is *holy*. This fact is stated by the angels. Is. 6, 3.—When we speak of man, we may use the word "holy" to denote that he is in accord with the Law of God, and therefore sinless. However, God is not subject to any law, and hence cannot sin. Whatever He does is right because He does it. If the Bible nevertheless says that God is holy, it

means to state what is expressed in Ps. 5, 4. "Wickedness" and "evil," of which the Psalmist there speaks, is that which is contrary to the revealed will of God. Therein He has no pleasure. He delights rather in all that is in accordance with His Law. Hence, "God is *holy*," means, "*He hates that which is evil, and loves that which is good.*"

God's holiness finds expression in His *justice*, or *righteousness*. That God is just is stated in Dan. 9, 7. The prophet acknowledges that God has dealt justly by Israel; for this reason Israel must stand before Him with confused faces, that is, faces expressive of the shame which they feel because they know that they have richly deserved all the punishment wherewith God has visited them. And their shame is the greater because they might and should have known that God would punish them; for this is what must happen *according to God's Word*. Thus God here proved His righteousness by dealing with them *according to His Word*.—On the other hand, God has promised forgiveness for Christ's sake to all who come before Him in true repentance; and He again proves His justice by dealing also with these *according to His words*— "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins." 1 John 1, 9.—"God is *just*," therefore, means, "*He deals with every one in accordance with His Word.*"—Both God's holiness and His justice should urge us to forsake all unrighteousness and penitently seek His grace.

g. God is *faithful*. The meaning of this statement is apparent from Ps. 33, 4. The Psalmist calls upon the godly to rejoice in the Lord and to praise Him. Why? "For the Word of the Lord is right." He has promised them blessings; and they have found that God meant to do all that He promised, for none of His promises have been broken. "And all His works are done in truth." His Word is truth. John 17, 17. And as they compare His works with His words, they find that He has not deceived them, but that He has done all that His Word has promised.—Hence, "God is *faithful*" means, "*He keeps all His promises.*"—The contemplation of God's faithfulness should work most cheerful confidence in all His promises to us. For this is a rule which holds good in the future as in the past: "All His works are done in truth."

h. God is *benevolent*. The word "benevolent" (Latin, *bene* = well, and *volens* = willing, or intent upon) means "intent upon doing good." This benevolence of God is evident from His acts. "The Lord is good to all." Ps. 145, 9. He is "abundant in goodness," Ex. 34, 6, eagerly grasping, as

it were, every opportunity of showering the evidences of His love and kindness upon His creatures. Hence, "God is *benevolent*," means, "He loves to do good unto His creatures."—God's benevolence manifests itself especially also over against those who are afflicted or in suffering or need. When He sees their anguish or their need,—even though they themselves may be the cause of it,—He longs to help and relieve them. The Bible says, He has mercy, or pity, upon them; He is merciful. Ps. 145, 9; Ex. 34, 6. Thus, "God is *merciful*," means, "*He has pity upon His creatures.*"—Again, the Bible tells us God is *gracious*. Ex. 34, 6. "*Gracious*" means "full of grace." And the real and fundamental meaning of "*grace*" is "*love*." God is filled with love toward man. And the rule according to which He would deal with man is the rule of love. He gives good gifts to man simply because He loves him. Not what man has been, nor what he has done, nor yet what man will, or may, or can do to repay Him, prompts and guides Him in bestowing good gifts. If He would consider man and man's worthiness, He could never bless Him; for man has deserved nothing at the hands of God but wrath and punishment. He bestows good gifts; yea, He forgives "*iniquity and transgression and sin,*" Ex. 34, 7, only because of His love, or by grace. Hence, "God is *gracious*," means, "*He gives good gifts which man has not deserved, from His pure love alone.*"

As we view these attributes of God, *viz.*, His benevolence, mercy, and grace, we justly comprehend His praise in the words, "God is Love." 1 John 4, 8. He does not only *harbor* love toward mankind. Nay, He *is* Love; all His thoughts, all His desires, His very being is love toward us. Hence we may justly look up unto Him with all confidence in the unwavering assurance of His abiding help and guidance and with hearts which love Him "because He first loved us." 1 John 4, 19.

Thus we have learned that the Bible teaches that "*God is a spirit; He is eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, holy, just, faithful, benevolent, merciful, and gracious.*" Qu. 104.

## *II. Why Revelation Alone can Teach Us What We must Know concerning God in Order to be Saved.*

a. What we have now learned concerning God is taught by the Bible. However, the Bible itself states that even such men as do not have the written Word may and do possess a certain knowledge of God, a knowledge which is derived from sources of nature, and which is, therefore, called the *natural knowledge of God*.

1. We have already heard of man's conscience (Qu. 8; see *The Decalog*, p. 18), which sits in judgment over him, warning him that he will be held responsible to God for all his acts. This *conscience* in his own bosom, therefore, points out to him the fact that there is a just God.

2. But the natural knowledge of God is not derived from the testimony of conscience only. Rom. 1, 19. 20 teaches that God has made Himself known to man through His works in nature. God Himself as well as His attributes are in themselves "invisible things." Yet we are told, these "invisible things of God" are "clearly seen" "from the creation of the world" and from "the things that are made." For he who considers the universe as a whole and the individual creatures in detail, and notes what power and wisdom was required to make the universe, must irresistibly be brought to the conclusion that it is the work of an all-wise Creator, — that there is a God. He who, while viewing the works of God, would still persist in declaring that "there is no God," is properly classified by the Bible as a fool. Ps. 14, 1. But the God who could make and order the universe must be possessed of infinite power, must be almighty; this is clear to human intelligence. Again, if He is almighty, He must be eternal also. For otherwise He and His power must have been brought into existence by some one besides Himself; and power derived from another being cannot be almighty power. Being almighty, He must, furthermore, be only one God; for there cannot be two almighty beings at the same time. Thus nature teaches "His [singular] eternal power and Godhead." It teaches even more than this, as, *e. g.*, His wisdom, goodness, justice, etc.

Thus we see that there is a *natural knowledge, derived from the testimony of man's conscience and from the works of God in nature.*

b. However, the natural knowledge of God is not sufficient to enable us to know God as we must know Him in order to be saved. Not only has sin corrupted man's mind, so that he can no longer fully grasp and understand the manifestations of God in nature, but even though he were able to read the book of nature aright, that which is most essential to the sinner in finding the way of life is not recorded there. For in order to be saved, man must know that God "gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3, 16. Therefore the *natural knowledge of God is insufficient to enable man to be saved thereby.*

c. Yet the natural knowledge of God is to serve a useful

purpose. In the first place, the fact that there is a God to whom man will be held accountable for all that he is and does should serve to restrain even *the ungodly* from outbursts of unbridled sin and vice. (Compare what has been said of the first use of the Law, *The Decalog*, pp. 115, 116.) — Furthermore, learning from nature that there is a God, men should ask who He is and how they may come unto Him. Thus they should be *led to seek Him* where alone He can be found, namely, *in the Bible*. Acts 17, 24—27. — And finally, if man disregards the warning voice of Nature as she cries aloud on every hand, within him and about him, that there is a God who is to be sought, the very fact of nature's testimony will be a witness of man's guilt before the judgment-seat of Christ, testifying that he knew, or that he might and should have known, that there is a God, and that therefore he is "*without excuse.*" Rom. 1, 20.

CONCLUSION.—Let us not walk in wilful blindness and ignorance. Let us heed the voice of Nature as she daily testifies unto us that there is a God. Neither let us rest content with what we can learn from nature concerning God. But let us seek Him diligently in the Book of books, which He has given unto us to "make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 3, 15.

### B. Who Is the True God? Qu. 105, 106.

INTRODUCTION.—We have heard that God is a spirit. We have seen also what attributes the Bible ascribes to Him. But if we were to ascribe to some other being what has been said of God, we would make that being our idol and thus become idolaters. Therefore the Bible states very clearly who this God is whom it has described unto us. It is the *Triune God*, or the *Holy Trinity*. We shall, therefore, now speak of

### THE HOLY TRINITY.

#### I. That there Are Three Distinct Persons in the Godhead.

a. We say, "God is triune." The word "triune" is composed of two parts, "tri" and "une." "Tri" stands for "three." Thus in the first part of the word "triune" we say that God is three.—We make the same statement in the articles of the Creed; for in each article we name a different person, each of whom we call "God." In the First Article we state that we believe in God the Father; in the Second, that we believe in God the Son; and in the Third, that we believe in God the Holy Ghost. And we do this because the Bible has taught us that there are three Persons in God. In

Matt. 28, 19 Christ commands us to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." All three Persons are named also in the Apostolic Benediction, 2 Cor. 13, 14, while in the Aaronitic Benediction, Num. 6, 24—26, the word "Lord" (Hebrew: "Jehovah") is used three times, once for each Person, the differences of Persons being clearly indicated by the work ascribed to each. (The Father blesses and keeps, *i. e.*, gives increase, creates, and preserves; the Son makes His face shine—in love—and is gracious, *i. e.*, wins the grace of God for us, redeems; the Holy Ghost lifts up His countenance upon us, that we may behold it as the countenance of *our* God, and thus gives us peace through faith in Christ.)

Thus we see that in God there are three Persons, *viz.*, the *Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.* Qu. 105.

b. These are not three different names for the same person as considered from various points of view. We may indeed sometimes properly apply various names to the same person among us. Thus there may be a man who has a father, a sister, and a son. If we speak to the father, we call this man his son; if we speak to his sister, we call him her brother; if we speak to his son, we call the man his father. But while we use the three names, son, brother, and father, we always mean the same person. So some men have said that there is only one Person in God, who, however, is sometimes called Father, sometimes Son, and at still other times Holy Ghost. But the Bible shows that in the Godhead there are really three *distinct* Persons. Thus at the baptism of Christ each Person of the Godhead revealed Himself in a different manner. Matt. 3, 16, 17. The Father spoke from heaven, "This is My beloved Son"; the Son was coming out of the water; and the Holy Ghost descended from heaven and lighted upon Jesus.—In John 15, 26 (quoted under Qu. 106) Jesus tells His disciples that He is going to the Father—hence He and the Father must be two distinct Persons—; that He will send the Comforter, that is, the Holy Ghost—hence He and the Holy Ghost must be distinct Persons—; and that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father—hence the Father and the Holy Ghost cannot be the same Person.

Thus, then, the true God is the "*Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three distinct Persons.*" Qu. 105.

c. The Bible tells us also in what way the three Persons of the Godhead are distinguished from each other. The distinctions are of two kinds, *viz.*, differences in the relations which they bear to each other (internal differences), and differences in their work with reference to the creatures (external differences).

1. Within the Godhead the Father is distinguished from the Son by the fact that He has begotten the Son. He Himself states this fact in Ps. 2, 7: "This day have I begotten Thee." God says, "This day." We have already heard that God is eternal, and hence there is no difference of time with Him. "This day" is the "day of eternity." Thus *the Father has begotten the Son from eternity.* Qu. 106. Likewise the Son is distinguished from the Father in this, that "*the Son is begotten of the Father from eternity.*" Qu. 106. The relation of the Holy Ghost to the Father is described in John 15, 26. The Holy Ghost "proceedeth from the Father"; He comes forth from the Father. And as Jesus is begotten of the Father from eternity, so also the relation of the Holy Ghost to the Father is established from eternity. "*The Holy Ghost from eternity proceeds from the Father.*" Qu. 106. For this reason He is called the Spirit of the Father ("the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead," Rom. 8, 11). But He is also called "*the Spirit of His Son.*" Gal. 4, 6. Hence the Holy Ghost proceeds also *from the Son.* Qu. 106.

2. The Persons of the Godhead are distinguished from each other with reference to their *work*. For while all the works of God are works of all three Persons, in each work one Person is especially prominent, and hence each work is ascribed to one Person *especially*. Thus "*to the Father is ascribed especially the work of Creation; to the Son, the work of Redemption; to the Holy Ghost, the work of Sanctification.*" Qu. 106. Of this we shall speak in detail as we discuss each article individually.

## *II. That there Are Not Three Gods, but Only One God.*

a. We have already heard that the true God is called the "Triune" God; that the first syllable of the word "Triune," *viz.*, "tri," stands for "thre." We shall now hear why we add the syllable "une." "Une" stands for "one." We say that God is "Triune" because there are three distinct Persons in the Godhead. We call Him "Triune" because these three Persons are only *one* God. That there is only one God is clearly taught in Deut. 6, 4. (Also in Eph. 4, 6; 1 Cor. 8, 4, etc.) It is also indicated in the Aaronitic Benediction, Num. 6, 24—26, where three divine Persons are described according to the special work of each, yet in each case the same divine name "Lord," "Jehovah," is used. There is only one Being, which is God. There is only one Essence (which constitutes a Being), which is the Essence of God—only "*one divine Essence.*" There are three Persons, each of whom has that divine Essence in its fulness, and each of whom is

true God. But yet there are not three Gods; there is only one God. And because He is only One, we say that God is "Triune."

b. That there is only one God, in whom there are three distinct Persons, is something which we cannot grasp with our understanding. It is too high for us. It must ever remain a mystery to us. But the fact that we cannot understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity cannot surprise us. It would be strange indeed if our small minds could comprehend the infinite Godhead. Neither can it make us less confident of salvation. For God has not revealed Himself to us in order that we should understand Him, but that we should believe in, worship, and adore Him. And this we may do the more readily because of the very fact that He is so infinitely wonderful, great, and glorious.

**CONCLUSION.**—We have thus seen that the true God is "*the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three distinct Persons in one divine Essence.*" Qu. 105. There is no God besides Him. Yet there are many men at the present time who pray and worship, but who—individually or as a body—do not recognize the Holy Trinity: Jews, Unitarians, Universalists, Mormons, lodges, etc. They have not the true God. They are worshiping idols. They are forfeiting salvation. For there is no salvation without the true God. (Athanasian Creed; *Concordia Triglotta*, 33, §§ 6—26.) Let us not be deceived or misled into taking part in their sin. Let us worship the "three distinct Persons in one divine Essence."

#### C. I Believe. Qu. 107. 108.

(**PREFATORY REMARKS.**—There are three ways of treating the subject-matter under Qu. 107 of *A Short Exposition of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism* [the definition of faith]. One of these is correct, another is admissible, the third is incorrect.—It is correct to speak of "knowledge," "assent," and "confidence" as of three separate and distinct definitions of faith, each of them complete in itself and therefore synonymous with the other two. The Bible itself uses this mode of expression. Thus in John 17, 3 faith is defined as "knowledge"; in 1 John 5, 1a it is defined as "assent," while Heb. 11, 1 describes it as "confidence." None of these definitions is incomplete, but each says no more and no less than either of the other two. For the heart's knowledge of Christ is precisely the same thing as the heart's assent to the message of Christ or as the heart's confidence in the vicarious merit of Christ. Nor can any man truthfully say that, while he does not place his heart's confidence in Christ, yet his heart knows Christ.—It is admissible also to describe confidence as the real essence of faith, and furthermore, to point out the truth that none can have con-

fidence in something whereof he has never heard, or which he considers mere fiction or allegory. In this case purely human knowledge and purely human assent are represented as conditions which logically must precede confidence. If this method is used, extreme care must be taken not to cause the impression as though purely human knowledge or assent were actually a fractional part of faith. — It is, however, absolutely incorrect to proceed in such a way as to create the impression as though knowledge, assent, and confidence formed a stairway of three steps leading to the state of grace, as though the possessor of knowledge had acquired one-third of faith, etc., or as though the scoffer who has knowledge, but no assent, had by that very fact approached nearer to the state of grace than he who has no knowledge at all of the Bible. It must be borne in mind at all times that purely human knowledge or purely human assent leaves a man just as much the prisoner of Satan as though he had never heard the Word of God — or rather, that his punishment will be the greater, because he has despised grace when it was offered him. Matt. 10, 14, 15. [See also "Der seligmachende Glaube" in *Christliche Dogmatik* by Dr. Franz Pieper, Vol. II, pp. 512, 513.]

The arrangement of Bible-texts under Qu. 107 shows that it was the author's intention that the first method should be employed in discussing the nature of faith, i. e., that knowledge, assent, and confidence should be defined in such a way as to present the same faith, but in each case from a different point of view.)

**INTRODUCTION.** — We have heard what and who the true God is. In the Creed we confess that we believe in Him. It is proper, therefore, now to inquire into the meaning of the words —

### "I BELIEVE IN GOD."

#### *I. What Is It to "Believe in God"? Qu. 107.*

Our *Short Exposition of Dr. Martin Luther's Catechism*, in harmony with the Bible, shows us true faith from a three-fold point of view. It gives us three definitions of faith in one sentence.

a. 1. In Rom. 10, 14 St. Paul asks: "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" The answer is, of course, "They cannot believe." In order, then, that we may believe in God, it is necessary that we should first hear of Him. We must be told who God is, and what His thoughts and promises are toward us. — However, it is not a matter of indifference what we hear concerning God. "Faith cometh by hearing," indeed. But that hearing, in order to work faith, must be hearing of "the Word of God." Rom. 10, 17. Hence, in order to believe, we must have heard, not what man imagines, but "*what the Scriptures say of God.*" Qu. 107. — Again, the mere fact that we have heard and

learned what the Bible says of God does not constitute faith. Jesus, in His high-priestly prayer, which He prayed in the night in which He was betrayed, speaks of faith thus: "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee," etc. John 17, 3. Thus true faith is to *know* God, to know Him as the Scriptures describe Him.

2. This *knowledge* which constitutes faith is not mere knowledge of the head, but knowledge of the heart. Judas, for instance, had knowledge of the head. He had been with Jesus for three years, and had heard Him preaching and teaching like the rest of His disciples. With his natural ears he had heard, and with his human mind he knew, what Jesus had preached. But he did not *know* Christ and the Father *with his heart*. Otherwise he would not have sinned as he did; and having sinned, he would not have gone down in despair of God's mercy.—Job, however, *knew* God. In the deepest depth of misery, poor, sick, and forsaken by all men, he confidently looked for comfort and help to God, saying, "I *know* that my Redeemer liveth," etc. Job 19, 25. And St. Paul, knowing that the hour of his death was at hand, says with full confidence of his heart, "I *know* whom I *have believed*." 2 Tim. 1, 12.—This is the knowledge of God which constitutes faith — the knowledge wherewith, having heard of God, we trust Him and rejoice in Him as in the God of our salvation in time and in eternity.

Thus, "to believe in God" is "*to know . . . what the Scriptures say of God.*" Qu. 107.

b. The Bible describes faith also from another point of view.

1. In John 5, 46, Jesus rebukes the Jews because of their unbelief, and states the cause thereof. They did not believe Moses, nor did they believe Christ. He does not say, "Had ye believed *in* Moses," but, "Had ye believed Moses." To "believe in" means to "trust in," while to "believe him" means to "accept as true what he says," to "give assent to his words." They did not give assent to that which Moses and Jesus said; they did not give assent to the Word of God. Their unbelief consisted in lack of assent. Had they assented, they would have had faith. Hence faith is *assent*.—Likewise in John 3, 36 Jesus describes an unbeliever as one "that believeth not the Son," does not accept as true what the Son says. Hence a believer is one who does give assent to the words of Christ, who accepts as true what the Scriptures say of God. And true faith is *assent*.

2. This assent which constitutes saving faith is not a mere assent of the head, of the mind, but rather the assent

of the *heart*. St. James warns us not to imagine that the mere fact that we know what the Bible teaches, and that we accept it as true with our minds, perhaps also publicly state that we believe that it is true, will save us. He tells us that the devils also believe with a faith of that kind. Jas. 2, 9. The devils know all that is written in the Bible. They also know that it is true. Yet they tremble at the thought of God. They have no true faith. Such faith, which is merely faith of the head and of the mouth, cannot save.—The assent which the Bible requires is such as is found with the nobleman who came to Jesus, filled with anxiety for his son, who was “at the point of death.” John 4, 46—53. He “believed the word which Jesus had spoken,” that is, he accepted it as true. His anxiety was allayed, and he went home rejoicing, because He believed *with all his heart* what the Lord had said.

Thus, “to believe in God” is to “accept as true what the Scriptures say of God.” Qu. 107.

c. 1. The Bible shows us true faith from still another point of view. Heb. 11, 1 we are told that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” We hope for that which we do not yet see or enjoy, but which we have good reason to expect. The things which a Christian hopes for are those things which the Bible promises him. When we hope for earthly things, there is always some measure of uncertainty present with us until we actually have not only good reason to expect them, but until we have the things themselves, their substance, when we can see, and feel, and touch with our hands what we have hoped for. Now we are told that with regard to those things of which the Bible speaks “faith is the substance.” That is, faith is that certainty, that assurance, which is as great and as firm as though we actually had them, as though we could see, feel, handle them, as though we had not only the prospect, but the substance of these things.—Faith is the “evidence of things not seen.” When in earthly things we are told that some great gift is prepared for us, we ask for evidence, or proof, that such is really the case. By proof, or evidence, we mean something which makes us sure that what we have been told is true. So in spiritual things, in those things of which the Bible tells us, “faith is the evidence,” that is, faith makes us sure of the truth or the promises of the Bible.—Hence these words describe faith as an assurance, as a certainty. Such certainty of the truth of promises is also called confidence. Therefore faith is *confidence*.—Such confidence we find with St. Paul, 2 Tim. 1, 12. He is not in doubt; he is sure of that

for which he hopes. "I am persuaded," that is, I am convinced, certain. He *trusted* in God; he *relied* in God; he trusted and relied without fear or doubt, but with firm assurance, *with firm confidence*. — Such faith we find also with the centurion. Matt. 8, 5—9. He believed, he was certain, that Jesus would heal his servant, and that He could do it by the mere power of His word.

2. However, while all true faith is confidence, not all confidence is faith, but only that confidence which rests upon God. And as we can have certain knowledge of God's thoughts toward us only from His Word, such confidence alone is true faith as rests upon the Word of God. Such was the faith of St. Paul, 2 Tim. 1, 12: "I know whom I have believed." *God had spoken*, and Paul had believed it. He is certain because his assurance is founded upon God's Word. — Likewise the nobleman whose son was sick. John 4, 46—53. He was confident that his son was healed because he "*believed the word which Jesus had spoken.*" V. 50.

Thus, "*to believe in God*" is "*with firm confidence to trust and rely in God.*" Qu. 107.

We have now learned that Christian faith, the faith which the Bible demands of us, is knowledge, assent, and confidence. As we may look at a triangular column and view it from three different view-points, so that we see a different side each time and yet the same column, so we have looked at faith from three view-points and yet seen the same faith each time. For true knowledge of God includes assent and confidence; true assent of the heart includes knowledge and confidence; and confidence includes knowledge and assent. May God grant us His grace rightly to believe in Him, i. e., "*to know and accept as true what the Scriptures say of God, and with firm confidence to trust and rely in God.*" Qu. 107.

## *II. Why do We Say, "I Believe," and Not, "We Believe"?*

Qu. 108.

In confessing our faith, we say in the Creed, "*I believe.*" It is a creed which is confessed by all Christians throughout the world. But though they all with one accord confess the same faith, they do not say, "*We believe,*" but each one says, "*I believe.*" Why is this done? The reason is apparent from Hab. 2, 4. The Lord is speaking of the days when, because of the sins of Judah, God would deliver them up into the hands of the Gentile Chaldeans. But He will not forget His own in those evil times. "*The just shall live,*" He says. He shall live "*by his faith.*" God will deal with each one individually. The ungodly shall not escape because of the

faith of the godly. Neither shall the godly perish because of the unbelief of the ungodly. He that would be saved must be saved by his *own* faith. The fact that others believe can nevermore save him. It will not avail him in any wise to say, "We believe"; he must be able to say, "I believe."—The same appears from Luke 7, 50. The woman to whom Jesus spoke these words had been a great sinner. And though she had repented and found forgiveness with Christ, the self-righteous stood ready to condemn her. But the universal contempt with which men regarded her did not affect the judgment of Christ. He deals with each person individually. And why did He forgive her? Not because of the conduct of the "righteous." No, *she* believed. Her faith had saved her. So will Christ judge *each of us* according to our personal faith or unbelief.—This truth is illustrated also by the Parable of the Foolish Virgins. Matt. 25, 8—12. When the bridegroom came, the foolish virgins found that they had no oil. They sought to profit by the fact that the wise virgins had oil; but their efforts were vain. Likewise shall every one be excluded from the heavenly marriage who has not oil, that is, faith of his own. The fact that he has belonged to a Christian family or even to a Christian congregation, cannot save him. He must be able to say, "I believe."

We see, then, that we do not say, "We believe," but, "I believe," "*because no one can be saved by another's faith, but every one must believe for himself.*" Qu. 108.

CONCLUSION.—"Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." Matt. 25, 13.

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## The First Article. Of Creation.

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### A. THE CREATOR.

(Qu. 109—111.)

INTRODUCTION.—We have heard that the true God is the Triune God, that is, that in the one Godhead there are three Persons. These three Persons are equal in glory, in power, in eternity, and in all the other attributes of the Godhead. None is God in a higher, none in a lesser sense, nor does any one of them rank higher in the Godhead than the other two. In Godhead and rank, therefore, there is no First, Second, or Third Person. However, the Persons of the Godhead are most frequently named in the order in which Christ mentions them in the words of institution of Baptism. Matt. 28, 19. And for this reason and in this sense we speak of the Father as of the First, of the Son as of the Second, and of the Holy Ghost as of the Third Person.—The Articles of the Creed also follow this order. The First Article, therefore, speaks of the First Person of the Godhead, of the Father. It describes Him with the words:—

“**The Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.**”

#### I. “THE FATHER ALMIGHTY.”

a. The First Person of the Godhead is called “Father.” The Bible itself applies this name. It also tells us why He is named thus.

1. We have heard the history of the baptism of Jesus. As our Savior came up out of the water, the Father spoke from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son.” Matt. 3, 17. The same thing occurred also upon the Mount of Transfiguration. Matt. 17, 5. If, then, Jesus is His Son, He is *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Thus the Scriptures also expressly call Him. Eph. 3, 14. And Jesus Himself calls Him Father: “I ascend unto My Father and your Father.” John 20, 17.—This last Bible-passage also indicates in what sense He is the Father of Jesus Christ. Jesus does not say, “I ascend to *our* Father,” but, “to My Father and your Father.” Though God is the Father of Christ and also of the Christians, He is Christ’s Father in a sense dif-

ferent from that in which He is the Father of the Christians. He is, as we shall see, our Father because He has *adopted* us in Christ. But He is the Father of Jesus because He has begotten Him from eternity. Ps. 2, 7.

Hence the First Person of the Godhead is called “the Father” “*because He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Qu. 109.

2. God is the Father also of men. And He has a right to expect that *all* men should recognize, love, honor, and obey Him as their Father. This right is founded upon the fact that He has created all. Mal. 2, 10. They all have received their lives, their being, and all that they need to sustain them, from the hand of God. He has provided for them more tenderly and more fully than any earthly father could have done. But though He is their Father by the act of creation, and they are His children, men have not kept inviolate this relation. They have not loved, honored, and obeyed Him as His children should do. By sin they have renounced their birthright. Like the prodigal son, Luke 15, 12. 13, they have left their Father’s house, and wasted the gifts which He had given them in “riotous living,” that is, in sin and disobedience to their God. And having left their Father’s house, and by their transgressions barred the door against themselves, they cannot return to Him by their own efforts; they cannot reopen the door; they cannot reclaim the title of children. And since *all* men have sinned, *all*, too, have ceased to be the children of God. — But God has opened another door for their return. That door is Jesus Christ. Gal. 4, 4. 5. This door is entered by faith. All who believe in Christ receive “the adoption of sons,” that is, God adopts them as His children for Christ’s sake. Hence we “are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Gal. 3, 26. For this reason Jesus calls God “My Father and *your* Father”: Jesus’ Father, because He has *begotten* Him; our Father, because He has *adopted* us. And the Father’s adoption of the believers is a real adoption. He treats them as His real children, as members of His family. Of this family of God we read Eph. 3, 14. 15. It is found “in heaven and earth.” In heaven there is God’s first-born, only-begotten Child, Jesus Christ; there are also the angels, who are “the sons of God” (Job 1, 6; 38, 7) by creation, and who have never, by sinning, forfeited their rights as children; there are also those men who have already died in the faith; and upon earth there are those who believe in Christ. All these form the family of God. And He is a *true* Father to them; He makes them His heirs, and they are called by His name

—“the children of God.” — The First Person of the Godhead is, therefore, justly called Father because He is “*also our true Father.*” Qu. 109.

We see, then, that the First Person of the Godhead is called Father “*because He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and also our true Father.*” Qu. 109.

A word of warning in this place may not be amiss. We hear men speaking of “the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man.” These words have so sweetly sentimental a ring that many repeat them thoughtlessly, not considering the evil that they are doing thereby. If these words were intended to say only this, that God has created all men, and that therefore they all *should* honor, love, and obey Him, and that any departure from the will of God in their lives or in their faith is ungodly,—doubly ungodly *because* God has created man and blessed him in a thousand ways,—then the intention at least would be good. However, the intention in the use of these words is to declare that, no matter what men’s conduct before God in their works and especially in their faith may be, God will nevertheless treat them in eternity as though He were the Father of all, and as if all men were His children. It is intended to be a song according to the tune, “They all adore the selfsame God, Christian, Jews, and Hottentot.” And in this sense this phrase is wrong, vicious, blasphemous. When the Jews said to Jesus, “We have one Father, even God,” John 8, 41, Jesus answered them, “If God were your Father, ye would love Me. . . . Ye are of your father the devil.” Vv. 42, 44. They alone who love Christ, the Christ of the Bible, the Anointed, their Prophet, Priest, and King, that is, they who believe in Christ, are the children of God and shall be heirs of God. The others are the children of the devil, and shall be heirs of the devil. Whoever, therefore, teaches “the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man” in a spiritual sense is asserting what Christ denies, and denying what Christ asserts. Let us not be misled, neither let us mislead. Let us seek to be children of God through faith alone, and let us warn all men that Christ is the only door to the Father’s house.

b. The First Person of the Trinity is called “the Father Almighty.” We have heard that He is our true Father. Every other true father also loves his children and *seeks* to provide for them, and to protect them. But often his power to do so is insufficient. But ours is the “Father Almighty.” Ps. 115, 3. He is able to provide for us in every need, to protect us against all danger and harm, yea, to turn into

a blessing even the greatest affliction or the enemies' schemes of vilest malice. The fact that He is not only our Father, but our "Father Almighty," should fill us with the greater confidence.

## II. "MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH."

a. 1. In Gen. 1, 1, we read: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." God "created" them. The meaning of the word "create" is seen from Gen. 1, 31: "God saw everything that He had *made*." God "created," therefore, means, God *made*."

2. However, the word "made," when used for "created," has a special meaning. Heaven and earth were made "in the beginning," the beginning of time and of all created things. Before the beginning there was nothing but God alone. Hence there was nothing out of which He could make heaven and earth. He could not make them out of something else; He could only make them out of nothing. This is stated expressly in Heb. 11, 3.—"God *created* the heaven and the earth," therefore, means, He "*made them out of nothing*."

3. How could He do that? The answer is found in the history of the work of Creation. Whenever God set out to make something, we read, "And God said." Gen. 1, 3. 6. 9. 11, etc. He simply spoke a word; and the power of His words was such that thereby things were made out of nothing. Thus God made the heaven and the earth *by His word*. This is stated in Heb. 11, 3.—"To create," therefore, means, "*to make something out of nothing by one's mere word*."

4. Again we ask, "How could He do that?" To explain His power to the mind of man is impossible; man's mind cannot grasp it. Therefore also all those who would glorify man's reason above the power of God refuse to believe that God created heaven and earth, but rather foolishly assert that the universe has always existed, or that it has sprung into existence spontaneously. But though we also cannot understand the wonderful power of God, we accept the statements of His Word *by faith*. Heb. 11, 3. And we rejoice the more because by faith we know that we and all the creatures of God have being and existence not because of an unavoidable spontaneous process of evolution, but because God has created us, and that He was prompted to such action by His own will and pleasure. "He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." Ps. 115, 3.

We have thus seen that God the Father is called the Creator "*because He has by His word made all things out of nothing*." Qu. 110.

b. "Maker of heaven and earth."

1. The Father is called "Maker," or "Creator," because He has made, or created. We ask, then, What has He made, or created? In Gen. 1, 1 we read: "God created the heaven and the earth." For this reason we speak of Him in the Creed as the "Maker of heaven and earth." But as we read the history of the work of Creation, we find that He not only prepared an empty heaven and an empty earth, but that heaven and earth were filled with things which He had made. These words, "the heaven and the earth," therefore, do not refer to heaven and earth only, but include "heaven and earth, the sea, and *all that in them is.*" Ex. 20, 11. Accordingly, St. Paul says: "By Him were *all things* created that are *in heaven* and that are *in earth.*" Col. 1, 16. "Heaven and earth," therefore, means "all things which God has made." And since He has *created* them, that is, made them out of nothing by His mere word, we call them "*creatures.*" Hence we also confess in Luther's explanation of the First Article: "I believe that God has made me and *all creatures.*" Qu. 103.

2. In Col. 1, 16 the Bible divides all things in heaven and in earth into two classes, speaking of them as "visible and invisible." Visible creatures are such as the eye of man can see; invisible, such as man cannot see. In accordance with these words we also speak of "*visible*" or "*invisible*" creatures.

God the Father is the Maker of "*heaven and earth*" therefore means, He has made "*all creatures, visible and invisible.*" Qu. 111.

**CONCLUSION.** — We have now learned why the First Person of the Godhead is called "the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." We adore and worship His infinite power and wisdom. But above all do we glorify His love, which has not only given us a place among His creatures, but has made us worthy through Christ to be called His children.

## B. THE INVISIBLE CREATURES.

(Qu. 112—115.)

**INTRODUCTION.** — God the Father is called the *Creator* because He has *created* all things. The things which He has created are called *creatures*. These are divided into two classes, *visible and invisible* creatures. Among the invisible creatures the *angels* are foremost (Qu. 112), that is, they occupy the highest rank as creatures. We shall now learn what the Bible teaches concerning

### The Angels.

The Bible does not tell us on what day the angels were created. But it does tell us that they were created at some time during the six days of creation. Ex. 20, 11. It furthermore teaches that, as they came from the hand of God, they were all alike pure and holy. Gen. 1, 31. Now, however, as we shall see, there are "*two kinds*" of angels, "*good and evil*." Qu. 114.

#### I. THE GOOD ANGELS. Qu. 114.

##### a. *What they are.*

1. In Heb. 1, 14 the holy angels are called "ministering spirits." Hence they are *spirits*. We have already learned what the Bible means by "a spirit" (Qu. 104), namely, "*a rational being without a body*." Angels, therefore, are beings that have understanding, but they have no bodies, and hence they are invisible to our mortal eyes. True, they have appeared to men in visible form. But in order to be seen by man, they took upon themselves the form of man. Thus the angel at the sepulcher of Jesus appeared as "*a young man . . . clothed in a long white garment*," Mark 16, 5; and the angels at the ascension of Christ appeared as "*two men . . . in white apparel*," Acts 1, 10.—Thus the angels are "*spirits*." Qu. 114.

2. The good angels are "*holy*." Matt. 25, 31. They are as the will of God would have them be. Sin has never entered into them. They *are without sin, and they hate that which is evil, and love that which is good*. Therefore, also, the angels rejoice when a sinner turns from ungodliness and repents. Luke 15, 10.—Thus the good angels are "*holy spirits*." Qu. 114.

3. In Matt. 18, 10 Jesus, speaking of little children, says: "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." Thus the angels are in heaven, and they behold the face of God. But to be in heaven and to behold the face of God is bliss, the highest bliss which can come to a creature. Hence the good angels are *in bliss*.—And in this bliss they shall ever remain. They do "*always*" behold the face of God. Therefore, when Christ shall come in glory, "*all the holy*" angels shall be with Him. Matt. 25, 31. None shall have been lost. In the angels we find already what shall be a gift of God to us in heaven, namely, that they can no more fall into sin and its consequences. Luke 20, 36. We say they are *confirmed*, made firm, or secure, in their eternal happiness.—Hence the good angels are "*already confirmed in their bliss*." Qu. 114.

4. Finally, we are told that the angels "excel in strength," Ps. 103, 20, that is, that they surpass, have greater strength than, other creatures. Their great strength is seen also from their mighty deeds. Thus the angel of the Lord slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night. 2 Kings 19, 35. And Daniel confesses that God's angel had shut the mouths of the lions that they could not hurt him. Dan. 6, 22.—Thus the angels are "*of great power.*" Qu. 114.

We have seen, then, that the good angels "*are holy spirits, already confirmed in their bliss, and of great power.*"

*b. What their occupation is.*

1. In Ps. 103, 20. 21 the Psalmist calls upon the angels to bless the Lord, that is, to praise Him. This is their occupation, their employment, their work, to praise and glorify God. Thus in the days of creation the angels sang the praises of God. Job 38, 7. At the birth of Christ the heavenly hosts appeared upon the plains of Bethlehem to glorify Him, Luke 2, 13. 14; and when He shall come to judge the world, He will come in glory, and the holy angels shall attend Him with praise and adoration, Matt. 25, 31. We have heard also that, when Isaiah saw the Lord in a vision, angels stood above His throne, crying to each other: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." Is. 6, 3.—Thus the office of the angels is to "*praise God.*" Qu. 114.

2. A further occupation of the angels is indicated by their name. For "*angel*" means "*messenger.*" They are employed by the Lord to carry His messages to men. Thus two angels came to Lot to warn him to flee from the city before the Lord would destroy it. Gen. 19, 1. 12. 13. And the Angel Gabriel was sent to Zacharias and to the Virgin Mary to announce the birth of John the Baptist and of Christ. Luke 1, 19. 26. Again, we find angels at the grave of Christ, bearing a message to the women and to the disciples. Mark 16, 8. This also is their regular employment. And they are ever eagerly intent upon performing it. While they are praising God, they are ever "*hearkening unto the voice of His Word,*" ready to "*do His pleasure.*" Ps. 103, 21.—The angels of God "*carry out His commands.*" Qu. 114.

3. But God sends them not only to bear messages, but also to "*serve mankind.*" Heb. 1, 14. This service is of various kinds. Thus, as we have seen, they have served men by announcing to them the works of God unto their salvation. Luke 1, 19. 26; Mark 16, 8. Matt. 18, 10 we are told that

God sends angels, "guardian angels," to attend the "little ones," to watch over them, and protect them from spiritual and bodily harm. Again, "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him." As a company of soldiers protects a person by taking him into their midst, so the angel of the Lord protects the children of God; he "delivereth them." Ps. 34, 7. Thus did the angels protect Lot against the Sodomites. Gen. 19, 9—11. Angels also protected Daniel in the lions' den, Dan. 6, and the three men in the fiery furnace, Dan. 3. And every Christian should at all times shall give His angels charge over thee." They watch over him. Ps. 91, 11. 12. They do so at God's command; "He shall give His angels charge over thee." They watch over him in "all his ways." No harm can come to him, no suffering can fall to his lot without the will of God. And at his departure from this life, angels shall carry his soul "into Abraham's bosom," that is, into heaven. Luke 16, 22.—Thus this belongs to the occupation of the angels that they "*serve mankind.*" Qu. 114.

Christians should at all times enjoy a feeling of sublime security in the knowledge that angels from heaven are sent to guard and protect them—a security which exceeds all that the power of man could ever offer. On the other hand, they should be exceedingly careful not to forfeit the protection of the angels. For their mission extends only to those who are the children of God, to "them who shall be heirs of salvation," Heb. 1, 14; to "them that fear Him," Ps. 34, 7. Nor is the promise of the angels' protection given to a Christian under all circumstances; the angels have been given charge "to keep thee *in all thy ways.*" Ps. 91, 11. When Christians leave the way of the commandments of God, or when they needlessly expose themselves to danger of body or soul, they are not in *their ways*; and if they are not destroyed by their folly, it is not because God were bound by a promise to protect them, but because He loves them even though they have broken faith with Him. However, the time will come when it will become evident that He will not be mocked. And none can tell how soon that time will come for him who tempts God.

The occupation of the good angels, then, consists in this, that they "*praise God, carry out His commands, and serve mankind.*" Qu. 114.

We have now learned concerning the good angels that "*they are holy spirits, already confirmed in their bliss, and of great power, who praise God, carry out His commands, and serve mankind.*" Qu. 114.

## II. THE EVIL ANGELS. Qu. 115.

*a. What they are.*

1. According to their nature, the evil angels also are really and truly angels, and are so described by the Scriptures, for example, in Jude 6. Therefore, like the good angels, they are *spirits*. Hence St. Paul describes their wickedness as “spiritual wickedness,” Eph. 6, 12, that is, wickedness of spiritual beings.—Thus evil angels are *spirits*.—As spirits they have been created by God. Ex. 20, 11. But as they came from the hand of God, there was no difference between them and the good angels. For they themselves were good. Gen. 1, 31. In John 8, 44 we are told that they “abode not in the truth.” Hence they originally were in the truth, that is, in harmony with the Word of God, John 18, 17, or holy. Neither were they of a lower order than those angels who remained holy. They had their “estate,” their domain, within which they ruled and which they controlled, and their “habitation,” or dwelling-place, with God in heaven. Jude 6.—But they did not remain holy; they “abode not in the truth.” John 8, 44. They turned away from holiness and now live in “spiritual wickedness.” Eph. 6, 12. The exact time when they turned to sin is not mentioned in the Bible. But it was soon after their creation. For Jesus says that the devil “was a murderer *from the beginning*,” John 8, 44, and we have already heard, Qu. 93, that St. John says: “The devil *sinneth from the beginning*.” 1 John 3, 8. He was the first to sin, and had already sinned before the fall of man; for it was he who led man into sin. Gen. 3, 1—7.—Thus the evil angels are spirits who have sinned, or “*fallen spirits*.” Qu. 115.

2. By their sin the evil angels left their “first estate,” their domain, and their “own habitation,” their dwelling-place in heaven. Jude 6. They have shut themselves out from the presence of God and from the bliss of heaven. And God has decreed that they should ever remain shut out. Yea, He has prepared hell for their punishment. Matt. 25, 41. And hell is an “*everlasting fire*.” Their punishment shall never end. Into this never-ending fire they will be sent when, in “the judgment of the Great Day,” their sentence will have been pronounced. And unto this Judgment He has “reserved” them, set them apart for it. They shall not escape it. They are bound as with chains. And their chains are “*everlasting chains*.” For them there is no hope of a return to the happiness of heaven. Their lot is the darkness of everlasting separation from God. God has cast them off, re-

jected them, forever.—Thus the evil angels are “*forever rejected.*” Qu. 115.

3. In Jude 6 the Bible speaks of the evil angels as being many. The same thought is also expressed in James 2, 19, “The devils also believe.” But in John 8, 44, and in 1 Pet. 5, 8, 9, the devil is spoken of as being only one, “*the devil.*” Whenever this is done, “*the devil*” designates “*the chief of the devils,*” also called “*Beelzebub,*” Luke 11, 11, “*Satan,*” Job 2, 1, or the “*Tempter,*” Matt. 4, 3, who leads and controls them in their plans and in their chosen work.

We have thus seen that the evil angels are “*the fallen spirits, forever rejected.*” Qu. 115.

*b. Their work.*

1. The evil angels have sinned against God. They have thereby entered upon a career of opposition and enmity toward God. For this reason the devil is called “*the enemy*” of God. Matt. 13, 38. And since the evil angels are rejected forever, they will never cease their enmity against God. They hate God. And as they hate Him, so do they hate also all that He does and all that He plans. For this reason they hate above all God’s noblest work, which He loves and wherein He rejoices: they hate man. They are also man’s enemies.

Hence the evil angels are “*the declared enemies of God and man.*” Qu. 115.

2. Their rage against God directly is impotent. Therefore they seek to injure Him by hindering His work in and for man. And since God seeks man’s salvation, they seek to lead him into damnation. This has been their endeavor from the days when man was in Paradise. Gen. 3, 1—5. Through his tempting the devil led man into sin, and thus brought the curse upon the whole human race. And when God sent His Son to redeem man, the devil sought to bring God’s plans to naught by tempting Christ also. Matt. 4, 1—11. He sought to destroy Job’s faith by afflicting him. And to the present day he is ever “*seeking whom he may devour.*” 1 Pet. 5, 8. Therefore Jesus calls him “*a murderer from the beginning,*” John 8, 44,—not a murderer of the body only, but a murderer of body and soul.—And his chief instrument in working man’s destruction is *deceit and lying.* It was by lying that he ensnared man in the beginning. Gen. 3, 1—5. When he tempted Jesus, he sought to make Him doubt the Father’s word, “*This is My beloved Son,*” Matt. 4, 3, and misquoted Scripture to Him, v. 6, thus endeavoring to cause

Him to believe a lie. He lied to Judas by telling him that no harm would come to Jesus if he would betray Him, Matt. 27, 3; and after Judas had done it, he again lied to him, telling him that there was no forgiveness for him, thus driving him into despair and suicide. Matt. 27, 5. And to his own he has often, in the history of the Church, lied, telling them by persecuting and killing Christ's disciples they are doing God service. Therefore Christ says of the devil: "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." John 8, 44.—He furthermore mixes *cunning* with falsehood, knowing well how to choose such falsehoods and to approach man at such a time and in such a manner as in each case will test most sorely his power to resist. Gen. 3, 1—5.—Neither must we be deceived with regard to his power to destroy. So great is his power that he keeps the world as a whole in the darkness of ungodliness, and in this darkness rules the world. Eph. 6, 12. He is to be feared as much as, yea, more than, a "roaring lion." 1 Pet. 5, 8. Hence St. Paul warns us against a feeling of security, of overconfidence. "We wrestle not with flesh and blood," Eph. 6, 12, with our equals, whom we can hope to vanquish by our own power. Only by the power of God, of which we lay hold by faith, can we resist him, 1 Pet. 5, 8. 9. Hence we should "be sober," not drunken with, or absorbed in, the lusts of the flesh or the cares and pleasures of this life; and "vigilant," ever watchful and on the alert to detect Satan's cunning, and to resist him by a steadfast faith.

Thus the evil angels are "*the declared enemies of God and man, and endeavor to destroy the works of God.*" Qu. 115.

We have now learned that the evil angels are "*the fallen spirits, forever rejected, who are the declared enemies of God and man, and endeavor to destroy the works of God.*" Qu. 115.

**CONCLUSION.**—We have heard in brief what the Bible tells us concerning the angels. What we have learned concerning the good angels should fill us with gratitude toward God because of the honor and security which He has vouchsafed to us by sending His own heavenly attendants to minister to us.—What the Bible teaches with reference to the evil angels should cause us, first of all, to adore the infinite Love which has preferred us even before the angels, inasmuch as, when we sinned, God has not cast us off forever, but has sent His Son to become our Savior. But it should also cause us to watch and pray lest we be again ensnared in the bondage from which Christ has redeemed us with His blood.

**C. THE VISIBLE CREATURES.**

(Qu. 116—119.)

INTRODUCTION.—We have spoken of the invisible creatures of God. In doing so, however, we have restricted our discussion to the only living beings of the invisible world of whom we have knowledge, namely, to the angels. We now turn to the visible world. The visible creatures of whom we have knowledge include inanimate things and living beings. But while we adore the almighty power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God, who has created them all for man's benefit, we turn our attention chiefly to that creature who is the head and the crown of the visible world. That creature is

**Man.***I. Why Man is Properly Called the Foremost among the Visible Creatures.*

a. In the explanation of the First Article we confess: "I believe that God has made me; . . . that He has given me my body, . . . eyes, ears, and all my members." In Gen. 2, 7 we are told how God created man. In the creation of man He did not proceed as He did in the creation of the fishes, the fowls, and the beasts. Gen. 1, 21. 24. When He wanted to make these, He simply spoke the word, "and it was so." But He, as it were, took special pains in creating man's body. He formed it of the dust of the ground, and carefully prepared it in all its parts. He made it more beautiful and more excellent than the body of any other living being. This we acknowledge when we say: "I believe that God has . . . given me my body, . . . eyes, ears, and all my members." Qu. 103.

Thus man is the foremost among the visible creatures "*because God Himself has prepared his body.*" Qu. 116.

b. However, in the explanation of the First Article we confess also: "I believe that God has made me; . . . that He has given me my . . . soul, . . . my reason, and all my senses." Qu. 103. Having formed man's body of the dust of the ground, God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Gen. 2, 7. Moreover, the soul which God gave him is endowed with "reason," with understanding, and with "senses," with the faculties of the mind. By bestowing upon man a rational soul, God has enabled him not only to understand, and to reason in, earthly things, but especially also to know God and to learn spiritual wisdom, in order that God's plan might be accomplished in him, namely, that he might live forever in blessed immor-

tality. To man alone among all visible creatures has been given a rational soul. This gift of God we acknowledge in the words: "I believe that God . . . has given me my . . . soul, . . . my reason, and all my senses." Qu. 103.

Thus man is properly called the foremost of all visible creatures "*because God . . . has given him a rational soul.*" Qu. 116.

(NOTE.—In this connection the question arises as to whether it is proper to speak of beasts also as having souls, or whether this is an attribute of man only. We must bear in mind that words in themselves are mere sounds, and that the propriety or impropriety of their use must always depend upon the meaning which they may, according to accepted usage, convey to those who hear them. Now, the Hebrew *nephesh* as well as the Greek *psyche* may mean life of any kind, or either word may mean the human soul. Life may be ascribed to man and beast, of course. And if some one should make it a practise to use the English word "soul" also to denote the mere life of man or beast, such usage would not in itself constitute false doctrine, provided it be understood correctly. However, there is ample reason for us not to adopt this usage. Our reasons for discouraging the use of the word "soul" in speaking of beasts are chiefly these:—

1. There is a difference of meaning between "soul" as applied to man and mere "life" as attributed to man or beast. A study of the original will clearly reveal this difference even where the same sound is used to denote both.

2. It is an inflexible rule of Bible English that the word "soul" should be used only of man. We have been unable to find a single exception to this rule in the Authorized Version. And even though it were possible to prove that the Bible ascribed to beasts all that is expressed by the English word "soul," we would — and ought to — still hesitate to depart from this very proper usage of Bible English.)

c. The highest excellency, however, which God has bestowed upon man in creation is mentioned in Gen. 1, 27: "God created man in His image." One's image is that which is like him, as, his picture, his statue, or the like. Man was created in the image of God; he was like God. And as we confess: "I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason, and all my senses," we remember not only *that* God has created us, but also that He has made man the foremost among the visible creatures inasmuch as He "*has made him in His image.*" Qu. 116.

Thus we find that man is the foremost among the visible creatures "*because God Himself has prepared his body, has given him a rational soul, and, above all, has made him in His image.*" Qu. 116.

*II. Wherein the Image of God Consisted. Qu. 117.*

Man was created in the image, the likeness, of God. We have already heard that "God is a spirit," John 4, 24, and hence has no flesh and bone. The image of God, therefore, could not consist in the form of man's body. The Bible tells us that it consisted rather

## a. "In blissful knowledge of God." Qu. 117.

1. In Col. 3, 10 we are admonished to "put on the new man." Of this new man we read that he is "renewed . . . after the image of Him that created him." The new man is "renewed," that is, in him is restored what was given to man in creation, namely, the image of God. This renewal is not a renewal of the body, but a renewal "in knowledge." Thus the image of God consisted in knowledge, knowledge of God. As God knows Himself, 1 Cor. 1, 11, so had He given to man to know God. Man as he was created knew who and what God is. He knew and understood the works of God in nature. Gen. 2, 20, 23. He knew also God's will in spiritual things. We have already heard that man knew the "holy will," the Law of God, perfectly. Qu. 8. (See *The Decalog*, p. 18.) He knew also God's "good and gracious" will, His plan to take man into "the kingdom prepared for" him "from the foundation of the world," Matt. 25, 34, into which he should enter without seeing death.—Thus the image of God consisted in "*knowledge of God*." Qu. 117.

2. This knowledge, however, was not knowledge which, while perhaps interesting, did not affect the heart of man, as, for instance, our knowledge of icebergs. Man knew God as *his own God*, who had loved and blessed him in the past, and who would love and bless him in the future. For him to think of God was to rejoice in God as a bride rejoices whenever she thinks of the bridegroom. The knowledge of God was to him the source of sweetest happiness, of sublimest bliss. It was a "*blissful knowledge*."

Hence man's likeness of God consisted in "*blissful knowledge of God*." Qu. 117.

## b. "In perfect righteousness and holiness." Qu. 117.

In Eph. 4, 24 the new man is said to be created "after God," that is, in the image, or likeness, of God. And that wherein he is created after God is "righteousness and true holiness."

1. God is righteous. That is, all that He does is in accord with His Word. Qu. 104. So man as he came from the hand of God was righteous, in accord with the Word of God. He was good, Gen. 1, 31; he was without sin. The

image of God, then, consisted "*in perfect righteousness.*" Qu. 117.

2. But Eph. 4, 24 adds, "and true holiness." Man was like God in this, that he was holy. He was holy in the sense in which we say of God that He is holy. That God is holy means that "He hates that which is evil, and loves that which is good." Qu. 104. So man had pleasure only in that which was in accord with the will of God, and hated all that is evil. Thus, bearing the image of God, man possessed "perfect... holiness." — Man was like God "*in perfect righteousness and holiness.*" Qu. 117.

We have thus seen that the divine image consisted "*in blissful knowledge of God and in perfect righteousness and holiness.*" Qu. 117.

### *III. How the Image of God was Lost, and How It is Regained.* Qu. 118.

a. Man was created in the image of God. But he did not remain in this likeness. He lost the divine image. He lost it when he fell into sin. The history of the Fall shows clearly the loss of all that we have noted as constituting the image of God. — Man had known God; but after he had sinned, he *knew Him no more.* He thought that he could hide himself and his sin from God. Gen. 3, 8, 10. He thought that he could excuse his sin before God by laying the blame at the door of others. Gen. 3, 12, 13. — Before the Fall man had been happy in the thought of God and of His presence. But now *the thought of God fills him with fear;* He does not want to meet his God. Gen. 3, 8. — His righteousness, his *sinlessness, was lost.* — His *holiness likewise had departed.* Man himself recognizes the fact that evil thoughts and desires rise in his heart, and hence he strives to cover his nakedness. Gen. 3, 7. Yea, God also bears witness to the same fact by providing garments for him. Gen. 3, 21.

Thus the greatest excellency which God had bestowed upon man, the image of God, was totally destroyed, was lost by the Fall. And this loss was not Adam's only, but the loss of all mankind. For when Adam now begat children, they were not begotten in the likeness of God, but in the likeness of Adam, Gen. 5, 3, having neither the blissful knowledge of God nor righteousness and holiness. As man is now born into the world, he no longer bears the image of God.

Thus the image of God "*was lost by the Fall.*" Qu. 118.

b. But while man is now born sinful and evil, Col. 3, 10 and Eph. 4, 24 speak of a *new man.* This new man is born

in us in conversion, that is, when we come to faith. And this new man "is renewed," Col. 3, 10, that is, to him is given anew what man has lost through Adam's fall. He is renewed "after the image of Him that created him," Col. 3, 10; he is created "after God," Eph. 4, 24. This new, believing man again bears the image of God.

1. He is renewed "*in knowledge*." He who believes that his sins are forgiven for Christ's sake knows the Lord as his God, as the God who loves Him in Christ.—And he *rejoices*, is happy, in this thought. He has *blissful knowledge* of God. Qu. 117.—With love and gratitude toward God in his heart, he strives to walk according to the will of the Lord, who has saved him; he walks in *righteousness*.—And his heart being purified by faith, Acts 15, 19, he again "hates that which is evil, and loves that which is good"; he "is created in . . . *holiness*."—Thus the believer has again the "*blissful knowledge of God*," and "*righteousness and holiness*," which constitutes the image of God. Qu. 117.

2. However, those who are already Christians, and in whom, therefore, the new man is already through faith a living reality, are nevertheless exhorted to "put on the new man." Eph. 4, 24. From this we learn that the work is not yet completed. They do indeed even now bear the image of God. But they should strive from day to day to bear it more fully and more perfectly. Hence only "a beginning is made of its renewal in believers." We Christians do know God as our God; but we "know in part." 1 Cor. 13, 12. We rejoice in God and are happy in His love; but with imperfection. We strive to walk in righteousness; but sin is ever present with us. And though our hearts are sanctified to "hate that which is evil, and to love that which is good," we still have the old man, the flesh, present with us, which manifests itself in evil lusts.

Thus we find that, with regard to the image of God, "*a beginning is made of its renewal in believers*." Qu. 118.

c. But while imperfection must ever attend us in this life, the day of perfection will most assuredly dawn for every one who abides in faith unto the end. Of this day the Psalmist speaks, Ps. 17, 15: "I will behold Thy face." "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 Cor. 13, 12. Full, perfect *knowledge* shall be granted us.—And, beholding God's face, "I shall be satisfied"; my inmost heart's desire and longing for my God will resolve itself into eternal bliss as I "behold Thy face"—truly "*blissful knowledge*."—"I will behold Thy face in

*righteousness*,” free from past sin, henceforth to sin no more forever—in “*perfect righteousness*”—and delighting in the prospect of the banishment of sin and all things evil—in “*perfect holiness*.”—Thus the image of God “*will be fully restored . . . in eternal life*.”

We have thus seen that the image of God “*was lost by the Fall, and while a beginning is made of its renewal in believers, it will be fully restored only in eternal life*.” Qu. 118.

**CONCLUSION.**—We shall enjoy this bliss of the restoration of the image of God not according to the soul only. It will be ours when we awake from the sleep of death. Ps. 17, 15. Even as we live here with body and soul, we shall live in heaven, only purified, transformed, glorified, bearing the image of God. Therefore with joy and with gratitude to God we confess even now: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth”; and especially also in view of the perfect restoration of the image of God, we say: “I believe that God has made me; . . . that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason, and all my senses.”

#### D. DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

(Qu. 120—122.)

**INTRODUCTION.**—We have heard that we call God the Father the “Maker of heaven and earth” because He has “made me and all creatures.” However, the explanation of the First Article in our Catechism teaches that “God has not forsaken His work as an architect leaves the house when it is finished, but He preserves all things and governs them by His eternal providence.” *Dietrich's Catechism*, Qu. 201. We shall, therefore, now speak of

##### God's Providence over Me.

###### I. God's Work of Preservation.

- a. We confess that God “has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason, and all my senses.” These are the things which constitute me, my person. We now proceed, “and still preserves them,” that is, these things, me, my person. Thus the fact that I still live and have my being is not due to my effort, but to the fact that God is by my side and sustains what He has made. Acts 17, 27. 28. Moreover, He preserves not only me, but all men, the good and the evil. (The words quoted in Acts 17, 27. 28 were spoken to the Athenians, who were, and to a great extent remained, unbelievers. Vv. 32—34.) Neither does His

work of preservation extend to man only, but to all His creatures. Heb. 1, 3.

Hence God "preserves . . . and all creatures." Qu. 120.

b. 1. God "has given me my body and soul," etc., "and still preserves them." This work of preservation is the work of His power. And since His power is almighty power, He is able to preserve me without operating through means, such as food, drink, etc., as He preserved Moses without food and drink during the forty days and forty nights which He spent upon Mount Sinai in the presence of the Lord. Ex. 34, 18. But while He is able to do this, it does not ordinarily please Him to do so. It is His established rule to sustain our lives through earthly means. Thus in the day of creation He ordained that man should live by food, and for this purpose gave him authority to use every plant and every fruit for food. Gen. 1, 29. (In the Bible, "meat" always means "food," never "flesh.") And after the Flood He permitted man, in addition to these, to use also the flesh of "every moving thing that liveth." Gen. 9, 1—3. But as it is God who preserves us, it is also He who gives us the means whereby He preserves us, as food, clothing, and shelter. Ps. 145, 15, 16. And not these only, but also such surroundings as may enable us to enjoy His gifts in contentment and happiness, as a Christian home, wife, children, good government, etc. (*Large Catechism*, 450, 13, 14.) — Therefore we confess: "*I believe that God . . . has given me . . . and still preserves . . . clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children.*" Qu. 121.

2. God could give us clothing, food, and shelter directly and without effort on our part. Thus He fed Israel in the wilderness with bread from heaven, and preserved their clothes miraculously for forty years. Deut. 8, 3, 4. He caused the ravens to feed Elijah, and daily replenished the supply of meal and of oil of the widow of Zarephath. 1 Kings 17. But again, God has established the rule that He will ordinarily give these things to man through his labors. Gen. 2, 15; 2 Thess. 3, 10. But He provides him opportunities to labor. Therefore He gives him "fields" that he may till; "cattle" that he may raise them for his use, all his "goods" where-with he may labor or which he may exchange for those things which he needs; health, skill, ability to labor, etc. Of all these things also God is the Giver. Therefore we confess: "*I believe that God . . . has given me . . . and still preserves . . . also . . . fields, cattle, and all my goods.*" Qu. 121.

Thus it is God who "*provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.*" Qu. 121.

3. But God's love toward me is manifested the more in this, that He not only gives what I need to support this body and life, but that He "*richly*" provides me with all these things. He does not give scantily the bare necessities of life. As a Father whose riches are boundless, He grants abundantly what we need, yea, more than we need.—He gives not only richly. He *daily* provides me with all that I need. Every day, as new wants arise, He grants abundantly what is required to sustain our lives. He has done this in the past; He promises to do it also henceforth. "He careth for you." 1 Pet. 5, 7.—And since we have experienced His fatherly goodness in the past, and as we have His promise to care for us also in the future, we should not dishonor Him by worrying as though we might perish for want of life's necessities. We should cast all our care upon Him, 1 Pet. 5, 7, confessing with full confidence: "*He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.*" Qu. 121.

We have thus seen that, for the purpose of preserving me, God "*has given me . . . and still preserves . . . clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods; that He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.*" Qu. 121.

Thus God's Providence consists in this, that, in the first place, "*He preserves . . . me and all creatures.*" Qu. 120.

## II. *God's Government.* Qu. 122.

We confess, furthermore: "I believe . . . that He defends me against all danger, and guards and protects me from all evil."

a. 1. In order to do this, He must be able to exercise control over the dangers and evils which threaten me, and over the conditions from which they arise. That such is indeed the case is seen from Gen. 8, 22, where we are told that the changes of seasons and times, and the conditions arising therefrom, are established by the decree of God's almighty power. And the fact that this established order continues is due to His control, or government. But He controls also the actions and thoughts of men, Ps. 33, 13—15. As a king seated upon his throne guides and directs the affairs of his kingdom, the Lord governs the world from His heavenly habitation. He "*beholdeth*," "*looketh upon, all the inhabitants of the earth.*" He "*considereth all their works,*" so that He may either prevent them or use them to promote

His own plans. He makes not only the good deeds of the godly subservient to His plans, but also the evil works of the ungodly. The evil deeds of the brethren of Joseph are made the means of bringing Joseph to Egypt, where God desired to make him great. Gen. 37. 41. Yea, if it is necessary for the progress of the plans of God, the Lord "fashioneth their hearts," that is, He causes them to think, to judge, and to plan in such a way that His counsels with regard to the fate of men upon earth must finally mature. And He fashioneth the hearts "alike," that is, the hearts of all men. He does so in the case of the mighty as well as of the weak, of the poor as well as of the rich, of the godly as well as of the ungodly. He gave unto Solomon a "wise and understanding heart," 1 Kings 3, 12, and to Daniel and his companions He gave "knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom." Dan. 1, 17. Again, the Lord fashioned the heart of Absalom to reject the wise counsel of Ahithophel and accept the foolish advice of Hushai, in order that David might be delivered and Absalom destroyed. 2 Sam. 16, 20—17, 14. And thus God governs and controls the whole world. Neither does this government extend only to those affairs which are great in the sight of man, but also to apparently most trivial things, the sparrows of the air and the hairs upon our heads. Matt. 10, 29. 30.

2. But this government of God has for its special purpose the true welfare of His Christians. He is, as we have heard, their true Father. Qu. 109. For the sake of believing Lot the men before his house were smitten with blindness, and Zoar was exempted from the fate which befell Sodom and Gomorrah. Gen. 19. For the sake of His people Israel, Moses was miraculously preserved. And afterwards God crushed the pride of Pharaoh for Israel's sake, and safely led His people from the house of bondage. Ex. 12—14. Again, when Saul persecuted the Church, God used his hatred of Christ to spread the Gospel. Acts 8, 1—4. And we, too, may rejoice in the knowledge that God so rules the world to-day that every disturbance in the world, yea, every persecution which the Church may suffer, shall, under the government of God, redound to the true welfare of the Lord's own.—Thus, according to His providence, God "*govern... all creatures.*" Qu. 120.

b. But when I say: "I believe . . . that He defends me against all danger, and guards and protects me from all evil," I confess that I believe that He not only governs the world, but that He is *my* Father indeed, who so governs me and all things that *I* may feel secure in the knowledge that

God's almighty power stands guard over *me* against all danger and harm.

1. Danger and harm may *threaten*. Thus Israel was in danger at the Red Sea, and full of great fear and distress. Ex. 14. So danger may threaten me too. But God defended Israel, and danger could not touch her. So God defends me, and I shall be safe and secure. He cares for the sparrow, a lowly creature. Much more does He care for me, whom His Son has bought with His blood. Yea, so fondly does He regard me that He has numbered the very hairs upon my head. Matt. 10, 29, 30. Therefore I need not fear even those who seek my very life. V. 28. They shall not touch a hair upon my head without my Father's will.—Thus God "*defends me against all danger.*" Qu. 122.

2. But does not the threatening danger nevertheless sometimes overtake a Christian and work him harm? Does not sometimes an evil befall him? No, never! For God has promised that it shall not. Ps. 91, 10. It is true, that which a Christian dreads may come upon him. But in that case it will not be permitted to harm him, but must work together for his greater good. Rom. 8, 28. Hence it is no evil. It is a blessing; perhaps a blessing in disguise, but a blessing nevertheless. No real evil is ever permitted to befall a true child of God.—God allowed Joseph to be sold as a slave. His brethren meant to destroy him, and he himself was filled with anguish. Gen. 42, 21. It seemed at that time an evil which befell him. But he lived to see the day when he could praise God for having led him through those paths of affliction. Gen. 50, 20. In that day he saw that what appeared to be an evil was God's way of leading him to honor and of preserving him for the great work of saving the lives of the Egyptians and his own father's house. So shall I see in eternity what here I believe according to God's Word, namely, that all that God suffers to befall me,—poverty, sickness, pain, enmity, etc.,—and which for a while causes me anguish and grief, is not an evil, but a blessing from my Father's hand. Truly, God "*guards and protects me from all evil.*" Qu. 122.

Thus we have seen that, in His providence, God "*preserves and governs me and all creatures.*" Qu. 120.

CONCLUSION.—Truly, we have a faithful God and Father. We should be of all men most cheerful and happy. No foe can harm us; no evil can befall us. And though reason cannot always penetrate the plans of God, no matter what befalls, sickness, poverty, enmity, death, we can say by faith, "This comes to me by the providence of God. It is *good.*"

**THE CONCLUSION OF THE FIRST ARTICLE.**

(Qu. 123—126.)

**INTRODUCTION.** — We have heard of God's work of creation and of His providence over us and all His creatures. The closing words of the explanation of the First Article now tell us what has prompted and still prompts God in the performance of this work, and in what manner we should acknowledge what God has done for us.

**I. What Moves God to Do All This? Qu. 123.**

a. "All this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me."

1. "All this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy." — We have heard that God is benevolent, that is, He loves to do good to His creatures. Qu. 104. This benevolence, this goodness of God, extends to all the works of His hands, but especially to those men who are His children in Christ. And it is this goodness of God which has prompted Him to create us, and which prompts Him to preserve and govern us. He does "*all this . . . out of . . . goodness.*" — God is also merciful; He "has pity upon His creatures." Qu. 104. He knows and sees that without Him they are helpless and must perish, and He longs to relieve their need and distress. And especially does His heart go out in pity to "them that fear Him." Ps. 103, 13. He does "*all this . . . out of . . . mercy.*" — His "*goodness and mercy*" is the cause of all that He has done and still does for us.

2. This goodness and mercy is such as a true father feels toward His children. Ps. 103, 13. Therefore it is called "*fatherly . . . goodness and mercy.*" — But it is not imperfect and variable like an earthly father's tenderness toward his children. It is unchangeably perfect, ready to bless even the wayward and ungrateful when they return, Jer. 3, 22, and enduring forever, Ps. 118, 1. It is such goodness and mercy as is found in God alone; it is "*divine goodness and mercy.*"

3. Neither is His "*fatherly, divine goodness and mercy*" only one cause of the benefits which He bestows upon us, while other considerations cooperate in inducing Him to bless us. It is the only cause of, the only reason for, all that we receive at His hands. He does "*all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy.*"

b. "Without any merit or worthiness in me." — If He does all this *purely out of goodness and mercy*, it is evident that there is nothing in us which calls forth the evidences of His love.

1. We have not earned, or merited, these gifts. A laborer who has done his master's will receives wages. He has earned, merited them, and has a right to expect and demand them. But God has created and blessed us before we had rendered any service unto Him. Rom. 11, 35. And though we had afterwards done all that He asks of us, we should still have no right to demand a reward. For he who has made a vessel or instrument has a right to demand that it serve him without a reward. Therefore, even though we had done His will perfectly, we should be "unprofitable servants," who "have done that which was our duty to do," Luke 17, 10. Therefore we confess that God does "all this . . . without any merit . . . in me."

2. But though there be no merit, there might still be worthiness. If Dives had given to Lazarus all that was necessary to relieve his need, the rich man would have given him something which he did not earn, and could not have earned. Luke 16, 19—21. But though Lazarus had not earned anything at the hands of Dives, he was worthy of aid. He possessed qualities which the rich man should have prized. He was blameless before men, filled with faith and Christian virtues. But we possess no such worthiness before God, no qualities which are excellent in His sight. On the contrary, we are filled with sin and iniquity. "We daily sin much, and indeed deserve nothing but punishment." We must confess with the centurion that there is 'no worthiness in us, Luke 7, 6. 7; we must say with Jacob that we are "not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies," Gen. 32, 10. Neither are we worthy of "the truth" which He shows us; that is, we are not worthy of this, that He makes true, that He keeps His promises toward us. By our sins we have forfeited the right to expect that He should keep the promises which He has made to those who shall walk in His ways. If He nevertheless shows us mercy and truth, He does "all this *without any worthiness in me.*"

Hence we justly confess with regard to all earthly blessings which God gives us that He does "*all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.*" Qu. 123.

## II. What Duty Does This Impose upon Me? Qu. 124.

a. "To thank and praise . . . Him."

1. When a man has shown us kindness, it is right that we should thank him, that is, that we should tell him that we know and acknowledge what he has done for us. Not to

be grateful to men who have befriended us is universally recognized as a shameful vice. Much more should we thank God for having given us such precious gifts without number and without merit or worthiness on our part. Ps. 118, 1. Hence "it is my duty to *thank . . . Him.*"

2. But "of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Luke 6, 45. If our hearts are filled with the realization and appreciation of the mercies of God, our mouths also will speak of them. And we shall speak of them not only to God in our secret chambers, but we shall say before men that the Lord is good to us. But to speak before men of the goodness of God is "to praise Him." And as it is our duty to realize and to appreciate what God has done for us, it is our duty also to praise Him before men. Ps. 26, 6. 7. — Hence "it is my duty to . . . *praise Him.*"

b. "To serve and obey Him."

1. Our gratitude should not be expressed in words only. If some man has shown us a great kindness, we inquire what we may do to show our gratitude. So also it is proper that we should inquire how we may show our gratitude toward God for His benefits. Thus did the Psalmist in Ps. 116, 12. Of course, we cannot repay God. But we can show that we recognize and that we prize His bountiful goodness. We can do this by doing what pleases God. To do what pleases God is called "serving God." — Hence, in view of God's goodness toward me, "it is my duty to . . . *serve . . . Him.*"

2. If we would do what pleases God, we must inquire what that is wherewith He is pleased. This we have already learned in the First Chief Part of our Catechism. He is pleased with those works which He asks of us in the Ten Commandments. In order to please Him, therefore, we must do what His commandments ask of us: we must obey Him. — Hence "it is my duty to . . . *obey Him.*"

As, therefore, we view the works of God's love, of which the First Article reminds us, the Bible teaches us that in gratitude "*for all this it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him.*" Qu. 124.

CONCLUSION.—What we have learned in the First Article is truth, which God has revealed unto us. And in the closing words of the explanation we state that we have known and accepted it as truth. Hence, reposing our hearts' confidence in Him of whose goodness and mercy we have heard, we say, "*This is most certainly true.*" Qu. 125.

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## The Second Article.

### Of Redemption.

#### INTRODUCTION.

“And in Jesus Christ.” Qu. 126—130.

INTRODUCTION.—There is a clear and definite distinction between the Christian religion and all false religions. All false religions agree in this, that they teach that man may procure heaven by certain works which he performs. The Christian religion alone teaches the truth that man need not and cannot earn heaven, but that it is freely given to him because Christ has won it for him by His active and suffering obedience. This truth is taught and confessed especially in the Second Article of the Creed. This article is, therefore, the most important part of the Creed and of the entire Catechism.

The Second Article teaches us to know Christ as our Savior. For this purpose it shows us two things, namely, who Christ is, and how He has wrought our salvation. We say it speaks of “the Person of Christ,” and of “the Work or Office of Christ.”

But before entering upon the discussion of these two points, we shall consider the introductory words of the Second Article:—

“And in Jesus Christ.”

#### I. THE IMPORT OF THE WORD “AND.”

a. The Second Article begins with the words “And in Jesus Christ.” The word “and” shows that something has been said before which must be remembered and, in this case, repeated here. And since we find that the subject and the principal verb are lacking in the sentence with which the Second Article begins, we correctly infer that these are indicated by the word “and.” Hence we must go back to the First Article to supply these. And there we find them to be the words, “I believe.” As in the First Article we said: “I believe in *God the Father*,” we here confess: “I believe in *Jesus Christ*.” Thus our faith embraces not only what has been said in the First Article, but the statements of the Second Article as well. And we rejoice in this fact. For unless we knew the truths expressed in the Second Article, all the benefits which are mentioned in the First Article would still leave us in a truly deplorable condition.

b. For in the First Article we have indeed heard that

"out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy" God has created me and all creatures, and by His divine providence preserves and defends me against all evil. We have also heard that in creation God has blessed me especially, inasmuch as He created me in His own image, in order that I should eternally rejoice in the knowledge and in the service of God.—But we have heard also that my lot and condition has undergone a complete change. Through sin the image of God has been completely destroyed, and I have been enthralled in the bonds of the devil. From this bondage my strength and my efforts could nevermore release me; but I must, as far as I alone am concerned, remain in the power of the devil for time and for eternity. The chief object of God in performing the work of creation, my eternal happiness, therefore, was completely frustrated.

c. But now follows the Second Article, which speaks of the Redeemer and of the work of redemption. We hear that Christ has redeemed us, bought us back, unto God. Satan is no longer our master, nor are we his bondslaves. Christ has purchased us, in order that He may restore unto us what God had planned for us, but what we had lost through sin. (*Large Catechism*, 453, 28—30.)

Therefore, we say rejoicingly, "And," that is, "I believe" "*in Jesus Christ.*"

## II. THE MEANING OF THE NAMES "JESUS CHRIST." Qu. 128.

We confess: "And in Jesus Christ." Two names are here applied to the Savior.

a. He is called "*Jesus.*" In Matt. 1, 21 we hear how He received this name. The angel of the Lord came unto Joseph, v. 20, and commanded him to name the child which should be born to Mary "*Jesus.*" However, we have already heard that the angels are the messengers of God, Qu. 114. Hence this command which the angels carried to Joseph was the command of God. Therefore it is God who has chosen this name for our Lord. The angel also tells Joseph why God had chosen this name for the Child. He says, "For," that is, the reason why He shall be called thus is this, "He shall save His people from their sins." Because He shall do this, He is to be called by this name. For this is the meaning of the word "*Jesus,*" namely, "*Savior,*" "*One who saves.*"—In our language we have still another word which denotes the same thing. That word is "*Redeemer.*" For a "*redeemer*" is one who "*redeems,*" that is, "*buys back.*" And Jesus is said to have redeemed us, because, when we, on account of our sins, belonged to the devil, He gave His life in order that we might belong to God.—The name "*Jesus,*" "*Savior,*"

"Redeemer," is justly given to our Lord. This is seen from Acts 4, 12. His name is "given among men" for the purpose that they may "be saved." Hence in Him there is salvation; and that salvation is for men, that is, for all men. He, therefore, is the "*Savior of all mankind.*" Qu. 129. On the other hand, no one else is worthy to bear that name; for "neither is there salvation in any other," etc. He therefore is "*the only Savior.*" Qu. 129.

Hence the Lord is called Jesus "*because He is the only Savior of all mankind.*" Qu. 120.

b. He is also called "*Christ.*" This word is taken from the Greek. In the Hebrew language the same word is "*Messiah.*" In our language both words mean, of course, the same thing, namely, "*the Anointed.*" — Thus "*He is called Christ, or Messiah, that is, the Anointed.*" Qu. 130. And He bears these names "*because He has been anointed.*" Qu. 130. Anointing was a ceremony of the Old Testament, and was conferred upon such as were to be either prophets (1 Kings 19, 16, Elisha), or priests (Ex. 40, 13—15, Aaron and his sons), or kings (1 Sam. 10, 1, Saul). How it was performed is seen from the anointing of Saul (1 Sam. 10, 1): "Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it upon his head." — That Jesus should be anointed was known even in the Old Testament, as is seen from the fact that He was called the "*Messiah.*" Dan. 9, 25. 26. It is prophesied expressly in Ps. 45, 7. In this place, and also in Acts 10, 38, we learn who it was that anointed Christ, namely, *God*. We hear also wherewith Christ was anointed, *viz.*, with "the oil of gladness," Ps. 45, 7, that is "*with the Holy Ghost and with power.*" Acts 10, 38. Qu. 130. And upon Him the Holy Ghost was poured out in special measure, yea, "*without measure.*" Qu. 130. For He was anointed "*above Thy fellows,*" that is, above others who also were anointed. Moreover, He was not anointed to be either a prophet, or a priest, or a king; but He was anointed "*to be our Prophet, Priest, and King,*" Qu. 130, as we shall see later. Qu. 139—142. —

Thus "*He is called Christ, or the Messiah, that is, the Anointed, because He has been anointed with the Holy Ghost without measure, to be our Prophet, Priest, and King.*" Qu. 130.

CONCLUSION.— Thus the very names by which our Lord is known set before the eyes of our spirit the work which He has performed for us. His very names are the Gospel in its briefest form, and should remind us of the infinite love which has prompted Him to become our Jesus and our Christ, and of the unspeakable glory which He has won for us.

**I. THE PERSON OF CHRIST.****A. The Divinity of Christ.** Qu. 131. 132.

INTRODUCTION.— We have heard that the Second Article of the Creed speaks of Jesus Christ, and that its statements concerning Christ may be divided into two parts, one telling us who Christ is, and the other, what Christ has done for us and suffered for our sake. We say these two parts treat “of the person of Christ,” and “of the work of Christ,” respectively. The person of Christ is discussed in the words: “And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,” which words Luther explains thus: “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord.” These words teach us three things, namely, that Christ is true God, that He is true man, and that this God-man is my Lord.— We consider, first, that

**JESUS CHRIST IS TRUE GOD.****I. How This Fact is Stated in the Second Article.**

a. We confess: “And in Jesus Christ.” As we have seen, the word “and” here stands for “I believe.” Hence we state that we believe in Jesus Christ. To believe in some one with Christian faith is “with firm confidence and trust to rely in” him. Qu. 107. Such faith we can have in God only. Hence *by confessing that we believe in Jesus Christ*, we acknowledge Him to be true God. (Luther says: “Thus we have the first part of this Article, of the divinity of Christ, which is demanded and evidenced not only by the word ‘only Son,’ but also by the first word, ‘I believe.’ For to whom I should say: I believe, and place my heart’s trust and confidence in Thee, must be my God, since the heart of man should trust and rely in nothing else than in God alone.”— Translated from St. Louis Edition of Luther’s Works, X, 1097. 1098.)

b. Again, in saying, “And in Jesus Christ,” we make mention of Him in the Creed as being equal in the Godhead with the Father and with the Holy Ghost. For we have already seen that the words, “I believe in God,” properly belong to all three Articles of the Creed in equal measure. Having stated, then, that we believe in God, we mention the Father in the First Article. In the Second Article we mention the Son in the same way as we confess our faith in God. Hence we acknowledge Jesus Christ to be true God by naming Him in the Creed as equal with the Father.

c. Finally we say, "His only Son." The word "His" refers to the Father. Jesus Christ is the Son of the Father. We, also, are indeed the children of God; for He has adopted us as His children. But Christ is the Son of God in another sense. In what sense He is called the Son is stated in the explanation of the Second Article where we say that He is "*begotten of the Father.*" Therefore also we do not merely say "His Son," but "His only Son." For though God has many children, He has only One who is begotten of Him. If, however, He is begotten, born, of the Father, He must partake of the nature of the Father. And since the Father is God, He also must be God, true God, of the same nature and substance with the Father, and equal with Him in all the divine attributes, in eternity, in majesty, and in power. — Thus we confess Christ to be true God by *calling Him "His only Son."* And in full agreement with the words of the Article itself, we confess in the explanation of the Second Article: "*I believe that Jesus Christ*" is "*true God, begotten of the Father from eternity.*" Qu. 131.

## II. How This Fact is Stated in the Scriptures.

The Creed, as we have seen, states clearly that Jesus Christ is true God. However, if we are to confess the Creed with all our hearts, it is necessary that we should know from the Scriptures that its statements are the truth of God's own Word. This is indeed the case. For the Bible teaches in various ways that Jesus Christ is true God.

a. In speaking of Christ, the Bible uses such names as can be applied to God only. Thus in 1 John 5, 20 Jesus is called "the true God." In Rom. 9, 5 He is called "God, blessed forever." When Thomas, who had refused to believe that the Lord was risen, beheld Him with his own eyes, he said: "My Lord and my God." John 20, 28. And Jesus does not rebuke him for calling Him his God; He rather rebukes him because he had not believed it without having first seen Him. And in the Old Testament, Jeremiah prophesied that He should be called "The Lord our Righteousness." And as we notice in the margin, the word here rendered "Lord" is "Jehovah" in the original. But Jehovah is a name which is used with reference to God only. In all these Bible-passages Jesus is expressly and directly called *God*. But the Bible ascribes unto Him also other names which clearly describe Him as the true God. Thus He is called the *Son of God*. In Ps. 2, 7 the Father Himself says: "Thou art My Son," not by adoption, but begotten "this day," that is, in the day of eternity. In John 3, 16 He is said to be

God's "only-begotten Son." And Rom. 8, 32 describes Him as God's "own Son," that is, the Son who, in distinction from the other sons of God (by adoption), is His own, begotten of Him. But in calling Him in all these places the Son whom God has begotten, the Bible clearly declares Him to be true God. For as we have seen, the Son partakes of the nature and substance of the father who has begotten Him. So Christ is "of the same substance with the Father" (Nicene Creed), He is God.—Hence we know that Christ is true God "*because the Scriptures ascribe to Him divine names.*" Qu. 132.

b. That He is true God is furthermore evidenced by the fact that the Bible describes Him as being possessed of attributes which belong to God only. In John 1, 1, 2 we read: "In the beginning was the Word." The beginning is the time of creation. Gen. 1, 1. All creatures were made at this time. Ex. 20, 11. The Word, Jesus, however, was not made then, but He "was," was already in existence. Hence He is not a creature; He was not made; He is from eternity. Thus Christ is here said to be *eternal*. Being eternal, He must be *unchangeable*. Qu. 104. This is expressly stated in Heb. 13, 8. He Himself, furthermore, tells us that He has all power, that He is *almighty*. Matt. 28, 18. On that morning when the risen Lord came to His disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, Peter said to Him: "Lord, Thou knowest all things." John 21, 17. And Jesus did not only fail to challenge Peter's statement, but forthwith told him what the remote future had in store for him, thus showing that what Peter had said was the truth; He knows all things, He is *all-wise*. And as He was about to ascend into heaven, He promised His disciples, His believers, that He would be with them "alway, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28, 20. However, in order to be with all believers at all times to the end of time, He must be "present everywhere at the same time"; He is *omnipresent, or ever-present*.—All these attributes of which we have heard are attributes which belong to God only. They are *divine attributes*. And He who possesses them is indeed the true God.—Thus we know that Christ is true God "*because the Scriptures ascribe to Him . . . divine attributes.*" Qu. 132.

c. The Bible also tells us of works which Christ has done or will yet do, and can be done by God alone. We read of many miracles which He performed while walking visibly upon earth. At the marriage in Cana He made water into wine. John 2, 1—11. He healed the man sick of the palsy by His mere word. Matt. 9, 1—8. At His rebuke the wind

and the waves were quieted. Luke 8, 22—25. And even death was subject to His power; Lazarus was raised, though he had been dead for four days, and decay had already set in. John 11, 38—44. All these are works which human power cannot accomplish. True, also the apostles and prophets have performed miracles. They did not do them by their own power, however, nor at the time which they chose, but it was God who wrought them through these men at His own appointed time. But when Christ wrought miracles, men “beheld *His* glory.” John 1, 14. When He made water into wine, He “manifested forth *His* glory.” John 1, 11.

He healed the man sick with the palsy after He had read the thoughts of the bystanders and as a proof that He has power in Himself to forgive sins. Matt. 9, 1—8. And before raising Lazarus He said to Martha: “*I am the Resurrection and the Life.*” John 11, 25. That He has within Himself full power over all things is seen also from John 1, 3, where the work of creation is ascribed to Him, and from Heb. 1, 3, where He is said to uphold all things by the word of His power. He has power to forgive sins upon earth. Matt. 9, 6. And at the end of time, it is He who shall execute judgment also, John 5, 27. Thus the Bible teaches that He has by His own power performed works, and will yet perform other works, which can be accomplished by the power of God alone. Hence we know that Jesus is true God “*because the Scriptures ascribe to Him . . . divine works.*” Qu. 132.

d. And, finally, the Bible demands that He should be honored and worshiped as God. The same God who has declared: “My glory will I not give to another,” Is. 42, 8, has also willed “that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father.” John 5, 23. The Father should be honored as God; so likewise should all men honor the Son as God. Yea, the Father will not accept honor from any one who does not honor the Son likewise. Thus all worship of God at the hands of those who will not honor Christ equally with the Father is an abomination before the Most High, so earnestly is the Father intent upon having men worship Christ as God. And not men only, but the very angels of God are called upon to worship Him. Heb. 1, 6. But worship belongs to God only. Matt. 4, 10. If then it is the will of God that Christ should be worshiped, He is indeed true God.—Hence we know that Jesus Christ is true God “*because the Scriptures ascribe to Him divine honor and glory.*” Qu. 132.

Thus there is abundant proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ, since “*the Scriptures ascribe to Him divine names, divine attributes, divine works, and divine honor and glory.*” Qu. 132.

CONCLUSION.—We are uttering the clear and everlasting truth of God's own Word when, in the Second Article, we confess: "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son," and, "I believe that Jesus Christ" is "true God, begotten of the Father from eternity." Let us ever continue in this confession, and let it be the confession of our inmost hearts. For upon the truth here confessed depends our eternal salvation.

### B. The Humanity of Christ. Qu. 131. 133.

INTRODUCTION.—Jesus Christ is "true God, begotten of the Father from eternity." This is our confession in the Creed. This is also the clear doctrine of the Word of God. However, He is not God only. He is also "true man." This fact we shall consider now.

#### JESUS CHRIST IS TRUE MAN.

##### I. How This Fact is Stated in the Second Article.

In the Second Article we confess that we believe that Jesus Christ "was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." Mary was a young woman of Nazareth, chaste and pure, a child of God. But she was truly a woman, a member of the human race. She received power to become the mother of Jesus Christ. This power was received from the Holy Ghost. Hence we say that Jesus was "conceived by the Holy Ghost." And by this power Mary gave birth to the Savior. He was "born of the Virgin Mary." Jesus, therefore, was born of a woman. And from His mother He received the nature which was His mother's nature, the human nature. Hence these words, "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," teach that Jesus was also true man. And in accordance with these words we say in the explanation: "*I believe that Jesus Christ is also true man, born of the Virgin Mary.*" Qu. 131.

##### II. How This Fact is Stated in the Bible.

a. The statement of the Creed that Jesus Christ "was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," is taken from the Bible. It tells us that "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman," Gal. 4, 4, that is, born of a woman. And being born of a human mother like all other men, He Himself is a partaker of His mother's nature, and hence true man. Therefore the Bible also calls Him directly and expressly "man," "the man Christ Jesus."—Thus we know that Christ is true man "because the Scriptures expressly call Him 'man.'" Qu. 133.

b. In addition to calling Him "man," the Bible also describes Him in such a way as will not fit any rational being except a true man.—When God created man, He first formed man's *body*; then He gave him a *soul*. And when He had done this, man's creation was completed. The man whom God had made consisted of these two parts, body and soul. And we have recognized these two as constituting the essential natural parts of man when in the First Article we ascribed to God our creation in the words, "I believe that God . . . has given me my body and soul."—Now, the Bible tells us that Christ also had a body and a soul. That He had a *body* is seen from His own words which He spoke to His disciples. Luke 24, 39. He would convince them that He is standing before them with a truly human body, with hands and feet, flesh and bones.—He Himself also tells us that He has a *soul*. In the Garden of Gethsemane He says, "*My soul* is exceeding sorrowful." Matt. 26, 38.—Thus we see that Christ had a body and a soul, the two parts which constitute a human being.—Hence we know that Christ is true man "*because the Scriptures . . . attribute to Him the natural parts . . . of man.*" Qu. 133.

c. And as the Bible describes Him as a true man, so it also describes His life upon earth as the life of a true man. We learn that He was born, a child like other children, Luke 2, 1—7, that He grew up and "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." Luke 2, 52. He walked about teaching and preaching. He became hungry, Matt. 4, 2, and thirsty, John 4, 7; He ate and drank, Matt. 11, 19; He became weary, John 4, 6; He slept, Mark 4, 38; He wept, John 11, 35; He was sorrowful, Matt. 26, 38; He suffered, and finally He died, Matt. 26, 38, giving up the ghost, Luke 23, 46. His ways were the ways of a true man.—Thus we know that He is true man "*because the Scriptures . . . attribute to Him the . . . ways of a man.*" Qu. 133.

Hence there is abundant proof of the humanity of Christ. For "*the Scriptures expressly call Him 'man,' and attribute to Him the natural parts and ways of a man.*" Qu. 133.

**CONCLUSION.**—Thus again we are uttering a divinely established truth when we confess that Jesus Christ "was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," and that, therefore, He is "also true man, born of the Virgin Mary." And as it is necessary that we should know and believe that Christ is true God, so is it necessary also to know and to believe that Jesus Christ is true man. For without such knowledge and faith there can be no salvation for us.

**C. The Personal Union of the Two Natures in Christ.**

(Qu. 134—138.)

**INTRODUCTION.**—The words of the Second Article which we have now discussed have taught us to confess that Jesus Christ is true God, and also that He is true man. But before we can consider the discussion of the doctrine concerning the person of Christ as taught by the Second Article completed, we must yet note the fact that this Article reads, “And in Jesus Christ . . . our Lord,” and that the explanation teaches us to confess: “I believe that Jesus Christ . . . is my Lord.” On the basis of these words, we shall now speak of

**THE PERSONAL UNION OF THE TWO NATURES IN CHRIST.***I. Wherein This Union Consists.* Qu. 134. 135.

a. We have seen that Jesus Christ is true God. We have also seen that He is true man. Nevertheless, we do not call Him “our Lords,” or “my Lords,” but we say, “our Lord,” and “my Lord.” We thus confess that we do not believe that there are two persons in Christ, one of whom is God while the other is man, but that there is only one person in Christ, who is both true God and true man. This is in agreement with the Bible and with the faith of the children of God in the Old and in the New Testament.—In the Old Testament we hear David saying, “And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?” 2 Sam. 7, 19. God told David through Nathan the prophet of the glories of the house of David in the days to come. He told him of the King of this House, who should rule over the people of God after David had died, the throne of whose kingdom should be established forever. 2 Sam. 7, 12. 13. David acknowledges the fact that, though God had hitherto made him great without merit of his own, the future glories which God thus promised him were greater still, and that these promises extended “for a great while to come.” Vv. 18. 19. His thoughts dwell especially upon that King, the Son of David. And as he thinks of Him, he joyfully exclaims: “And is this the manner of man?” He recognizes the fact that this King should be true man, his own Son. But he realizes also the other fact that this Son must be more than mere man. For “is this the manner of man” that he should rule forever? All other men rule only for a time. This King, therefore, must be more than mere man; He must be true God also. David thus sees in Christ what also he expressed in the words of the psalm, “The Lord said

unto my Lord," Ps. 110, 1, namely, the truly *human nature* of the Son of David, and the truly *divine nature* of the Son of God, yet not two Sons, or two Kings, but the *one King with two natures*. — Thus Christ is represented also in Rom. 9, 5. There St. Paul says that Jesus, "*as concerning the flesh*," came from the fathers. Being descended from the fathers, He must be man. "*As concerning the flesh*," he has the human nature. But the very fact that the Apostle uses these words, "*as concerning the flesh*," shows that in another respect He is not descended from the fathers, that He has another nature besides the human nature. And what nature that is may be seen from the words, "who is . . . God blessed forever." It is the nature of God, the divine nature. Thus according to this statement of St. Paul, Christ is true God and true man. Yet he does not speak of two persons, or two Christs, but *one Christ* with a *human* and a *divine* nature. And because the *two natures are united in the one person* in Christ, we call it a "*personal union*." — Hence, the personal union of the two natures in Christ consists in this, that in Christ's one person there are two natures, namely, "*the divine nature and the human nature*." Qu. 135.

b. The Bible also tells us how this union has been brought about. In John 1, 14 we read, "The Word was made flesh." The Word is Jesus Christ, the second person in the Godhead, the true God. This Word, Christ, according to the divine nature, "*was in the beginning*," v. 3, having been begotten by the Father from eternity. This divine Person, "*the Word*," "*was made flesh*." The "*flesh*" is the nature of man. Hence the Son of God became man. The human nature became the nature of the Son of God, *was received into the person of the Son of God*. — This is taught also in 1 Tim. 3, 16, "*God was manifest in the flesh*." Jesus is God. He is from eternity. But being God only, He was invisible, could not be seen by man. But He became manifest, became visible. This took place when He appeared "*in the flesh*," when He became man. But when He became man, He took into His person another nature in addition to the divine nature, which He had had from eternity, thus becoming one person with two natures. Thus, again, we find that the *Son of God received into His person the human nature*. — The personal union has been brought about in this way, "*that the Son of God has received the human nature into His person*." Qu. 135.

c. This union of the two natures is a very close and intimate one. The human nature does indeed remain a true human nature also in its union with the divine nature in the person of Christ. And the divine nature likewise remains

truly divine. But they are so closely united that each has part in those properties of the other which it does not possess in itself and which it would not share were it not united with the other nature in the person of Christ.

1. In Is. 9, 6 the prophet says: "Unto us a child is born." It is a human child which is born. In speaking of Christ as a human child, the prophet describes Him according to His human nature. But of this human child he says, "And the government shall be upon His shoulder," the government according to which God governs the world; "and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." The government of the world and such names as the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace belong unto Christ according to the divine nature. But they are here ascribed to the human child, to the human nature of Christ. Thus in the personal union the *human nature in Christ partakes of the properties of the divine nature*. — In Matt. 28, 18, Christ says: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." If all power is given unto Him, He is almighty. Almighty power, however, cannot be given unto Him according to the divine nature; for as true God He has been almighty from eternity. It is given unto Him rather according to the human nature. Almighty power is not a property of the human nature. But in the personal union in Christ *the human nature partakes of this property which is inherent in the divine nature only, of the property of almighty power*. — Again, in Matt. 28, 20, Christ says: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." He is speaking of His whole person, but with special reference to His human nature. This appears from the connection with v. 18. Moreover, His visible presence is about to be removed. His presence had been visible only according to the human nature. And in order to reassure them that He would be present with them even though invisible, He speaks these words. Thus, again, they are spoken with special reference to His human nature. And so the promise of His continued presence is made with special reference to His human nature. Now, the human nature is never omnipresent in itself. Omnipresence is an attribute of the divine nature. But in the person of Christ the *human nature partakes of the properties of the divine nature*. (*Formula of Concord*, 691, 76.)

2. Contrariwise, in the personal union in Christ the divine nature partakes also of the properties of the human nature. — In 1 Tim. 3, 16 St. Paul says: "God was manifest in the flesh." God was manifest means God was visible. He was visible

"in the flesh," when He became man. Christ is God only according to the divine nature. Of this divine nature St. Paul says that it was seen. Visibility, however, is not a property of the divine nature. Christ was visible according to the human nature. But because of the union of the two natures in Christ, visibility is here ascribed to the divine nature. Thus in the personal union the *divine nature in Christ partakes of the properties of the human nature*.—Again, the same apostle says: "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. 2, 9, so that it can be seen and felt as a body. (Greek: *somatikos* = in the manner, or form, of a body.) A body does not, however, properly belong to the divine, but to the human nature of Christ. But here bodily manifestation, a body, is ascribed to the divine nature, since in the personal union *the divine nature partakes of the properties of the human nature*.—In Acts 3, 15 the Jews are said to have "killed the Prince of Life." The Prince of Life is Jesus according to His divine nature. Now, the divine nature cannot in itself suffer and die. To be able to suffer and die is a property which naturally belongs to the human nature. But because of the personal union in Christ, *the divine nature partakes of the properties of the human nature*.—Likewise, the blood of Jesus Christ is said to be the blood of the Son of God. 1 John 1, 7. He is the Son of God according to the divine nature. But He has blood according to the human nature. Here again, then, we see that in the personal union in Christ *the divine nature partakes of the properties of the human nature*.

Thus in the person of Christ, the human nature partakes of the properties of the divine nature; and the divine nature partakes of the properties of the human nature, or, "*in this one Person each of the two natures partakes of the properties of the other*." Qu. 135.

We have now seen that in Christ Jesus "*the divine nature and the human nature*," Qu. 134, are united "*in such manner that the Son of God has received the human nature into His person, and that in this one Person each of the two natures partakes of the properties of the other*." Qu. 135.

## *II. Why We may Rejoice in the Knowledge of the Personal Union. Qu. 136—138.*

There was a time when Jesus was God only. At that time *He did not have two natures, but only one, namely, the divine nature*. But it became necessary when He wanted to perform His great work for us and for our sakes, when

He wanted to become our Savior. We learn this from Matt. 18, 11. "The Son of Man is come" means He has become man, "has received into His person the human nature." And He has done this in order to be able "to save that which was lost." That which was lost is the human race; they were lost because they all had sinned. It was for the sake of mankind, of me and all other men, that Christ became man.—Hence the Son of God assumed the human nature "*to redeem and save sinful mankind.*" Qu. 136.

a. In order to be able to save us, it was necessary that He should be true man.

1. God had given His Law unto man. He had declared also that, without the fulfilment of this Law, none should enter heaven. We were unable to comply with the demands of the Law. If we were to be saved, another had to take our place and to fulfil the Law for us, render human obedience to all the commandments. Christ wanted to save us by thus fulfilling the Law for us. In order, then, to be able to be our substitute in the fulfilment of the Law, it was necessary that He should become man. Therefore He was "made of a woman" in order that He might be "made under the Law," that is, in man's stead assume all the obligations of the Law, "that we might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. 4, 4, 5.—Thus it was necessary that our Redeemer should be a true man in order "*that He might be capable of fulfilling the Law . . . as all men's Substitute.*" Qu. 137.

2. Another reason why our Redeemer must be true man is mentioned in Heb. 2, 14. We are told that "the children are partakers of flesh and blood"; we, all those who were to be redeemed, were men, human beings. Therefore, "He also Himself likewise took part of the same," became true man. This was necessary in order that "He might destroy," rob of his power over man, "the devil," "that had the power of death," held us in the bondage of eternal death. This He could accomplish only "through death." In order to destroy the devil, Christ must die. He must die as our Substitute, die in man's stead a human death in atonement for the sins of the human race. But, now, God according to the divine nature cannot suffer and die. In order "*that He might be capable of . . . suffering and dying as all men's Substitute,*" Qu. 137, it was necessary that our Redeemer should be true man.

Thus it was necessary that the Son of God should receive into His person the true human nature, in order "*that He might be capable of fulfilling the Law, of suffering and dying, as all men's Substitute.*" Qu. 137.

3. But while our Redeemer must be a true man, none of the men living upon earth could become our Redeemer. Ps. 49, 7. 8 tells us that "none of them," even though they be rich and mighty, v. 6, "can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him"; and though he should attempt it, he will find that "the redemption of their soul is precious," requires a greater price than he is able to pay; and hence the redemption of their soul "ceaseth forever," since he cannot bring to successful conclusion what he has begun. Whoever would redeem man must fulfil the Law for him. And no mere human being can fulfil the Law for another. For even though he be perfect, he must fulfil the Law for himself during his whole lifetime and can never begin to work for others. Whoever would redeem man must, furthermore, suffer the punishment for the sins of men. But no mere human being, though he were righteous himself, can do this. For no man can bear such measure of punishment as is sufficient to atone for the sins of the world. Hence no mere human being was sufficient by obedience to the Law and by suffering and death "*to appease the wrath of God,*" and to break the cruel chains wherewith sin, death, and the devil held us bound, "*to overcome sin, death, and the devil.*" If therefore the work of our redemption was to be performed at all, One must perform it who is true God. For this reason it was necessary that it should be the Son of God, who became man in order to redeem us. He alone was "*sufficient to appease the wrath of God and to overcome sin, death, and the devil.*" Qu. 138.

Thus, in order "*to redeem and save sinful mankind,*" Qu. 136, "*the Son of God has received the human nature into His divine person,*" Qu. 135, who, according to "*the human nature,*" Qu. 134, was "*capable of fulfilling the Law, of suffering and dying, as all men's Substitute,*" Qu. 137, and, according to "*the divine nature,*" Qu. 134, was "*sufficient to appease the wrath of God and to overcome sin, death, and the devil.*" Qu. 138.

**CONCLUSION.** — Such, then, is the personal union of the two natures in Christ, and such its purpose. Well may we lift up our hearts with grateful adoration to the God who has thus made provision for our redemption. Well may we say with St. Paul: "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." In truth a mystery to human reason, far transcending the thoughts of man. Yet a blessed mystery. For unto faith it is granted to receive what reason cannot grasp.

## II. THE OFFICE OF CHRIST.

### A. The Threefold Nature of Christ's Office. Qu. 139—142.

INTRODUCTION.—In discussing the person of Christ, we have seen that He is true God from eternity, and that, in the fulness of time, He became also true man. We have learned, also, that He became man in order that He might perform a certain work. This work is the work of redeeming mankind, of “purchasing them back,” in order that they might again be the children of God, as they had been when God had first created man. And because He has bought us again, we call Him “our Lord.” For this reason we confess in the Second Article: “And in Jesus Christ . . . *our Lord*,” and in the explanation: “I believe that Jesus Christ . . . *is my Lord, who has redeemed me.*” This work of redeeming, or saving, us—the work of redemption—is called “The Work of Christ,” or “The Office of Christ.”

The office of Christ, therefore, is *one* office: He is our Redeemer, or Savior. However, a person holding a single office may, in the administration of that office, perform various functions. Thus David held the office of king; but in the administration of that office he performed the functions of a lawgiver, a judge, a general, etc. So also Christ, in the performance of His office of Savior, performed various functions. These functions are indicated by the name “Christ.” This word, as we have seen, means “the Anointed.” And He is called “the Anointed” because He has been anointed as our Prophet, our Priest, and our King. Therefore, while His office is only one, we say it is threefold—not three offices, but one threefold office—“that of a Prophet, a Priest, and a King.” Qu. 139.

We shall now speak of *the threefold nature of the office of Christ.*

### I. THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF CHRIST.

#### Christ is our *Prophet.*

a. It is proper, then, that we should first of all inquire what the Bible means by “a prophet.” God describes Jesus as a prophet, Deut. 18, 18, with the words: “I will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him.” A prophet, therefore, is one in whose mouth is the Word of God, who speaks what God commands him. We say, a prophet is “*one who preaches, or teaches, the Word of God.*”

b. The Bible tells us that Jesus is a prophet. As such

He is described in the Old Testament. Moses, about to die, speaks of Him to Israel, Deut. 18, 15, as of "a Prophet . . . like unto me," that is, whom the Lord shall know face to face, Deut. 34, 10, and adds, "Unto Him ye shall hearken." For as a prophet He shall speak to you what God would have you know and believe.—The Father also represents Him as a prophet when, on the Mount of Transfiguration, He says, "Hear ye Him." Matt. 17, 10. He shall preach and teach. "Hear ye Him," for His preaching and teaching is in accordance with My will.—St. John also describes Him as a prophet when he tells us that "He hath declared" the Father, John 1, 18, that is, He has made known the Father unto us, especially as concerning His will to usward. For in teaching us to know the will of the Father, Jesus acted as a prophet.—Hence *the Scriptures teach that Jesus is a Prophet.*

c. We ask, How has Jesus performed this His work of a Prophet? We have heard that "He hath declared" the Father. John 1, 18. He has made known the Father and the Father's will. And what He has preached concerning the Father and His will is seen from the preceding words, John 1, 17: "The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."—The real substance of Christ's prophetic activity was not the preaching of the Law. Moses had preached that; and Jesus has added nothing thereto. When He did preach the Law, He only explained what Moses had already taught. (Example: Matt. 5, 21, 22 and 27, 28.) And when He preached and explained what Moses had taught in the Law, His purpose was merely to convince men of their sin, to make them realize that they cannot keep the Law, and that, therefore, they have need of something besides the Law to save them. This is, for instance, the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount. Matt. 5—8.—Christ came above all to preach "grace and truth,"—to teach men to know that God has prepared salvation for them without merit or worthiness on their part, from His pure love alone, and that He will keep faith, or "truth," in the performance of the promise of such salvation. Christ came chiefly as a preacher of the Gospel.—However, in preaching the Gospel, Jesus had to speak chiefly of His own work. For through Him was performed the work of redemption; in Him did the love of God prepare for us the salvation which He came to preach to us. His work as a prophet, therefore, consisted chiefly in this, that He made *Himself* known unto us, "*in this, that He . . . revealed Himself.*" Qu. 140.—The sum and substance of His revelation is contained in

John 3, 16. He has revealed to us the fact that He is God's only-begotten Son, whom the Father has given that, believing in Him, we might not perish. Thus He has revealed Himself "*as the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world.*" Qu. 140.—As such He has revealed Himself *by word of mouth.* He Himself has spoken the words, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son," etc. John 3, 16. "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." Matt. 18, 11. "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11, 28. Thus has He "*by word revealed Himself as the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world.*" Qu. 140.—But not by word of mouth only. We have already heard of the mighty deeds, the miracles, which He performed. He did not perform them in vain display of His power. He Himself tells us for what purpose they were wrought. He says to the Jews: "Though you believe not Me, believe the works." John 10, 38. His works testified most convincingly that He was indeed the Son of God come in the flesh, "come to save that which was lost." Matt. 18, 11. Thus has He also "*by deed revealed Himself as the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world.*" Qu. 140.

Hence as our Prophet, Christ has "*by word and deed revealed Himself . . . as the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world.*" Qu. 140.

d. However, Christ did not cease to be our Prophet when He ascended into heaven. He is even now performing the functions of this office. He is still revealing Himself to men. How He does this is seen from Luke 10, 16. Jesus spoke these words to the seventy disciples as He sent them forth to preach Christ. Though the Lord used their lips to utter His words, the words which they spoke were truly His own words. Whosoever heard the disciples preaching the Gospel, therefore, heard Christ's own words. He heard Christ speaking through His disciples. And since it was Christ who spoke through them, to reject their words was to reject Christ and the Father who had sent Christ.—But these seventy are not the only ones who have been commissioned to carry the words of Christ to men. When Christ was about to ascend into heaven, He gave command to all His Church, to all His Christians, to preach the Gospel to all nations. Matt. 28, 19, 20. Moreover, He promised that, as they carried out this command, He would be with them "always, even unto the end of the world." Hence, wherever Christians, in obedience to this command of Christ, publicly or privately teach men to know the Savior, the Lord Himself

is with them; their words are His words just as truly as though Christ visibly appeared and revealed Himself directly by the words of His own lips. Thus has He often spoken to us from the days when we first heard of Him upon our mothers' knees; and thus does He to-day speak to us through all who, being Christians, have command to speak of Him; especially has He ordained the public service of the Word for the purpose of publicly revealing Himself to us and to all men. And thus is He now acting as your Prophet, inasmuch as, through your teacher, He is leading you into His knowledge.—Hence Christ now performs His prophetic office in this way, that He “*by the preaching of the Gospel still reveals Himself as the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world.*” Qu. 140.

Christ's prophetic office, therefore, consists “*in this, that He by word and deed revealed Himself, and by the preaching of the Gospel still reveals Himself, as the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world.*”

## II. THE PRIESTLY (OR SACERDOTAL) OFFICE OF CHRIST.

We have heard that Jesus is called “Christ,” that is, “the Anointed,” because God has anointed Him to be our Prophet. As our Prophet He reveals Himself to us as “*our Lord.*” But He is called “*our Lord*” not only because He has revealed Himself as such, but more especially also because He has performed those works whereby He has set us free from the power of the devil, who had gained possession over us through our sins, and won anew the right to call us His own—those works by which He bought us. The performance of those works whereby Christ has thus become “*our Lord*” constitutes His priestly office. And unto this office also He has been chosen and anointed by God. This, too, is indicated by the name Christ. He is called “*Christ*” because He has been anointed also as our Priest.

a. What, then, is a priest? Priests were appointed in the Old Testament in order that they might stand between man and God, that they should be *mediators* between man and God. The purpose of their mediation, of their standing between man and God, was to restore to man the peace with God which man had broken by his sin. In order to accomplish this they must speak to God, that is, pray for man and, furthermore, “offer gifts and sacrifices,” Heb. 8, 3, to God for man. By such gifts and sacrifices they “made atonement,” Lev. 16, 24, that is, rendered satisfaction to God for the wrong committed by man's sin. They thus “made

reconciliation," Lev. 8, 15, they reconciled man to God. In the Bible, "to reconcile man to God" means "to restore man to favor with God by removing man's offense." (Therefore the Bible never says that *God* is reconciled, but that *man is reconciled* to God.) — Thus the priests were mediators, they stood between man and God; and their principal functions were to pray for man and to offer gifts and sacrifices to God for man. These functions were performed, for instance, by the high priest, who stood at the head of the entire order of priests, on the annual Day of Atonement. Lev. 16.

b. As our Priest, Christ has made atonement for us. God had made demands upon man. He had given man His Law and demanded that man should fulfil it. But man had not done this; he had broken, transgressed, the Law. God, therefore, was angry with him. In order that the just wrath of God might be removed, it was necessary that, first of all, man should meet his obligations with reference to the Law of God. But since man was unable to do this, it became necessary that another should do it for him, if indeed he was to be reconciled to his God. — How and by whom this was done is explained in Gal. 4, 4, 5: "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman"; Christ became man, being born of the Virgin Mary. He was "made under the Law." Being true God, Christ was not under the Law; He was not under obligation to fulfil it. But He, of His own free will and in accord with the will of the Father, placed Himself under the Law; He undertook to fulfil it. And since He was not required to keep it for Himself, He could do it for man. And He *has* fulfilled it. Moreover, His fulfilment of the Law was perfect in every respect. According to Heb. 7, 26, He was, also with respect to the Law which was given unto man, "holy," having His delight in doing the will of God, John 4, 34; "harmless," unharmed by the commission of any sin; "undefiled," untouched by the filth of sin; "separate from sinners," in a class which was separate and distinct from the class in which are found all other men upon earth, all the rest being sinners. Again, we learn from Gal. 4, 5 the purpose for which Christ rendered this perfect obedience to the Law, *viz.*, "to redeem them that were under the Law." They that were "under the Law" were all the children of men. They were in duty bound to fulfil the Law, but could not do it; Christ, therefore, did it for them. And His perfect obedience to all the commandments is imputed to them. It is given to them by Christ. It is to be accounted to them as though they themselves had done all that the Law requires of them. Nothing is to

be demanded of them any more. They have Christ's fulfilment of the commandments. They have Christ's righteousness. And though they themselves have not been able to do a single act or think a single thought such as the Law demanded of them, they have all these things ready, prepared by Christ, given them to be theirs in their own name. And having thus a perfect obedience, which they can offer to God, the Father, who was justly angry with them, is now fully satisfied with them. This fulfilment of the Law has been wrought for them by Christ, "that we might receive the adoption of sons." Because of Christ's obedience, God again adopts us as His children, His sons and daughters.—This perfect obedience is a gift and sacrifice which Christ, our Priest, has offered unto God for us.

Hence Christ's priestly office consists "*in this, that He in our stead perfectly fulfilled the Law.*" Qu. 141.

c. However, the fulfilment of the Law was not the only thing which was necessary in order to deliver us from the wrath of God. For we had not only *failed to do* what the Law requires of us, but we had also directly and positively, by thought, word, and deed, *broken the Law* times without number. We had sinned. And "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Ezek. 18, 20. Hence we must die; we must die both the temporal and the eternal death. We must suffer forever in hell-fire the punishment for our sins.. If, then, we ourselves were to suffer such punishment, our condition would be absolutely hopeless.—In the Old Testament it was the duty of the high priest to reconcile man to God by offering sacrifices, especially on the Day of Atonement. Lev. 16. At these sacrifices, the sacrificial beasts, which had not sinned, were slain in the stead of man, whose guilt had merited death.—However, these sacrifices of the Old Testament had not in themselves the power to atone for the sins of man. On the one hand, the sacrifices themselves were insufficient to redeem the souls of men; they had virtue and power only because they were types and shadows of Christ, prefiguring, and conveying the benefits of, His death and the shedding of His blood. On the other hand, the priests also were not worthy to appear before God as mediators for others, they themselves being sinful and in need of a mediator, and they were required to make reconciliation for their own sins before offering sacrifices for the sins of the people, and were permitted to offer sacrifices unto God for the people only because they were types of the true High Priest, of Jesus Christ. And since neither the sacrifices nor the priests of the Old Testament were in themselves

sufficient to cancel the debt of man, but rather were only types and shadows of things to come, those priests could never conclude the work of making atonement, but must ever repeat their sacrifices until He had come who "by His own blood entered once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Heb. 9, 12. — The true and real sacrifice for our sins, which was prefigured by the sacrifices of the Old Testament, was Jesus Christ. How He became the sacrifice for our reconciliation is seen from 1 Pet. 2, 24. "Christ His own self bare our sins in His own body"; He took them upon Himself as though they were His own, so that He must in justice suffer the punishment for them in His own body. And this punishment reached its culmination "on the tree," on the cross. On the cross He suffered torture and death. Thus, like the sacrificial beasts of the Old Testament, He who had done no wrong died in the stead of those who had sinned. In this way Christ Himself became the sacrifice for our sins. — This sacrifice was not a mere creature, but He who is "made higher than the heavens." Heb. 7, 26. His blood was the blood of God, His suffering and death the suffering and death of God, and therefore sufficiently precious in the sight of the Father to outweigh the guilt of the whole world. By His sacrifice we have been forever set free from the curse and punishment of our sins. "By whose stripes ye were healed." 1 Pet. 2, 24. — And He Himself was also the sacrificing Priest. Being "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," Heb. 7, 26, He did not need, "as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins." — Such being the Sacrifice and such the High Priest, there is no need of repeating the offering "for the sins of the people; for this He did once, when He offered up Himself." Heb. 7, 27. "For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." Heb. 10, 14.

Thus Christ's priestly office consists "*in this, that He . . . has sacrificed Himself for us.*" Qu. 141.

d. The priests of the Old Testament were required not only to offer up sacrifices for the sins of the people, but to appear before God also in prayer for those for whom they made atonement by their sacrifices. (See Num. 16, 46—48, Aaron offering incense, signifying prayer. Also 1 Sam. 7, 5; 12, 19. 23.) — Christ, our perfect High Priest, likewise offers prayers, makes intercession, for men. He is our Advocate with the Father, 1 John 2, 1. An advocate is one's defender, pleader, counselor at law, who pleads one's cause before a judge. Christ pleads our cause before God. He is qualified to do this because "He is the propitiation for our sins."

To propitiate means to restore friendly feeling by making amends for the wrongs by which such friendly feeling has been disturbed. Christ has propitiated God by making amends for the sins by which we had provoked Him to anger. In order to propitiate God, Christ has sacrificed Himself. Thus He has Himself become the means whereby God has been propitiated; He is the "propitiation for our sins." And now He pleads our cause before God by reminding Him of His own sacrifice in atonement for our transgressions, by asking the Father to have patience with us, to forgive our sins, since He Himself has died for us.—He pleads, indeed, for all men. For "He is the propitiation for . . . the sins of the whole world." He pleads even for the ungodly. The nature of His plea for these may be learned from the Parable of the Barren Fig-tree. Luke 13, 6—9. He asks the Father to grant them time for repentance, in order that His sacrifice for them may not have been made in vain.—He pleads especially for those who are His own. He has done this even while upon earth. Thus in the same night in which He was betrayed, He prayed the prayer which is recorded in John 17, and which is called the Sacerdotal, or High-priestly prayer, of Christ. And He has not ceased to pray for us since He has entered into glory. He is our "Advocate with the Father." He prays for us, who are beset with sin and manifold dangers of the soul. Christians, indeed, do not want to sin. They want to avoid all iniquity. But notwithstanding their sincerest efforts to lead sinless lives, they ever and again stumble and fall. "We daily sin much, and indeed deserve nothing but punishment." And they are deeply grieved at the thought of their sin. But as they sorrow over their sins, they should be comforted by the thought that Jesus is at the right hand of God, pleading for them. He asks the Father to forgive them their sins, because "He is the propitiation for our sins." He prays for them as He prayed for Peter, Luke 22, 32, that their "faith fail not," that they may rise again from every fall, that He keep them through His own name, John 17, 11, that He might keep them from the evil, John 17, 15, so that, being preserved in faith unto the end, they may behold the glory of Christ which the Father has given unto Him. John 17, 24.

Thus the priestly office of Christ consists also "*in this, that He . . . still intercedes for us with His heavenly Father.*" Qu. 141.

Christ's priestly office, therefore, consists "*in this, that He in our stead perfectly fulfilled the Law, and sacrificed Himself for us, and still intercedes for us with His heavenly Father.*" Qu. 141.

### III. THE KINGLY (OR ROYAL) OFFICE OF CHRIST.

We have now seen that the office of Christ embraces His functions of a prophet and a priest. As our Priest He has redeemed us; as our Prophet He reveals Himself to us as our Redeemer. And because He has redeemed us and taught us to know Him as our Redeemer, we call Him "our Lord." But He is furthermore called "our Lord" because, having made us His own and taught us to know Him, He now continually guards and governs us as His own, and for our sakes governs all things that we may be preserved in safety as His own. To rule, or govern, however, is the function of a king. Therefore the Bible calls Christ "a King," and He Himself lays claim to this title, John 18, 37. — That Jesus is a king is indicated also by the name "Christ," the Anointed, He having been anointed as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

Christ, then, is a king. As such He has a kingdom. This kingdom is one, embracing all creatures in heaven, in earth, and in hell. But this one kingdom of Christ assumes a threefold aspect according to the creatures in this kingdom which are placed into most prominent view. Hence also the Bible speaks of this one kingdom of Christ in a threefold sense, or as of a threefold kingdom. It is

#### *a. A Kingdom of Power.*

1. The kingdom of Christ embraces the domain over which His power extends. His power, however, extends over all creatures. For He Himself says: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Matt. 28, 18. "Heaven and earth," as we have already seen, includes "all creatures, visible and invisible." Qu. 111. Hence He tells us: "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." Matt. 11, 27. The Father has "put all things under His feet." Ps. 8, 6. "He left nothing that is not put under Him." Heb. 2, 8. And this is true with regard to "things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth," that is, in hell, Phil. 2, 10, the animate and the inanimate, the good angels and the evil angels, and godly and ungodly men. — Hence the kingly office of Christ consists "*in this, that He . . . rules over all creatures.*" Qu. 142.

2. The nature of His rule also is indicated in Matt. 28, 18: "All power is given unto Me." He rules by His power. He has "all power," almighty power. This power is employed in ruling this all-embracing kingdom. And since it is almighty power by which He rules, no creature can fail to bow to His will. "Even the winds and the sea obey

Him." Matt. 8, 23—27. At His command, death must release its prey. John 11, 43. 44. One word from His lips can hurl His enemies into the dust. John 18, 6. And, though long rebellious, ungodly men and angels will in the appointed day be made to bend their knees before Him in acknowledgement of His divine power, and to "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Phil. 2, 11. "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" Dan. 4, 35.—Especially does He, in ruling heaven and earth, have regard for the fact that He is "our Lord," "my Lord," the Lord and King of His Christians. Therefore He so controls the events in the world and its history that the believers' true welfare must always be promoted thereby. Cf. Matt. 24, 22; Rom. 8, 28.—Since, then, Christ rules over all creatures by His almighty power, we say "that He *mightily* rules over all creatures." Qu. 142. And we call this kingdom of Christ "*the Kingdom of Power.*"

Christ's Kingdom of Power, therefore, consists "*in this, that He mightily rules over all creatures.*" Qu. 142.

*b. A Kingdom of Grace.*

1. Christ Himself speaks of His kingdom also in another sense. In John 18, 27 He describes Himself as a King—not a king after the manner of earthly kings, but a king who was born, who had come into the world, for the purpose of bearing witness unto the truth. The truth is His Word. John 17, 17. And by the preaching of this truth, His Word, He has founded and maintained a kingdom. For "every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." John 18, 17. They who hear His voice are they who believe His Word, His Christians, His Church. Hence the kingdom of Christ in this special sense is "*His Church.*" Qu. 142.

2. Christ is the King of His Church. As her King He governs her. The manner of this government is indicated in Matt. 21, 5. The "daughter of Sion" is the Church. Christ, her King, comes unto her. But as the Church's King, Christ does not come riding upon a horse, in pride and with display of power and self-asserting splendor, as do earthly kings. He rather comes "sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass," in humility. As Sion's King He is "meek," kind, gentle, patient with the infirmities of His Christians, not willing to judge and condemn, but rather to forgive and to bless. Thus He does not govern the Church by the force which His almighty power is able to exert, but rather by His love, His grace.—His grace speaks to them through His "truth," John 18, 37, His Word, His Gospel.

Through the Gospel He offers unto them all that He has won for them by His vicarious obedience, suffering, and death — forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation. And “every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.” John 18, 37. His believers yield willing obedience to His Word of grace. — Thus this is not a kingdom which is “of this world,” John 18, 36, but a spiritual kingdom, Christ through His Word holding sway over the hearts of men. Luke 17, 20. 21. — And since this kingdom is established and ruled by the grace of Christ, we call it the “Kingdom of Grace.” — Hence Christ’s kingly office consists “*in this, that He . . . especially governs His Church.*” Qu. 142.

3. But this Kingdom of Grace is assailed by enemies, who seek to destroy it. It would be destroyed if those who are citizens therein would cease to “hear His voice,” that is, cease to believe. The enemies of the Church are the devil and the world. They are mighty and cunning, enticing, ridiculing, threatening, and persecuting. And it is only a “little flock,” Luke 12, 32, which constitutes the Church; and its members are helpless because of the presence with them of their own flesh. — But as her King, Christ does not forsake her amid the dangers which surround her, but Himself is present with her, and helps and protects her. This also He does through the Word of His grace. Through His Word He upholds His Christians so that amid all dangers, all temptations and persecutions, they can remain steadfast in the faith unto the end. His grace is sufficient for them; His strength is made perfect in their weakness. 2 Cor. 12, 9; *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book*, No. 375. And since Christ protects her, the Church, the Kingdom of Grace, shall not perish while the earth endures; “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Matt. 16, 18; *Ev. Luth. Hymn-Book*, No. 273. — Thus, as the King of Grace, Christ “protects His Church.” Qu. 142.

Christ’s Kingdom of Grace, therefore, consists “*in this, that He . . . especially governs and protects His Church.*” Qu. 143.

#### c. A Kingdom of Glory.

1. The Church of Christ shall not perish, but shall weather all storms, continuing to exist unto the end of the world. But while under the shelter of Christ’s gracious protection it is safe from destruction, it is exposed to all manner of hardship and afflictions. This is true with regard to the Church as a whole and also with regard to the individual members. “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” Acts 14, 22. This fact is recognized

also by St. Paul, 2 Tim. 4, 18, when he speaks of “every evil work,” from which he hopes to be delivered. Individually and as a Church, Christians must here bear the cross. Matt. 16, 24.

2. But Christians, individually and as a Church, have the sure prospect of deliverance from “every evil work.” 2 Tim. 4, 18. Such deliverance shall come to every one who abides in the Kingdom of Grace unto the end. It shall come to each of them when through death he leaves this earth, and to the entire Church of Christ at the last day. Then they shall enter into the “heavenly kingdom,” into heaven itself. No evil shall there come near them forever; purest joy and bliss shall then be their eternal lot. And their greatest bliss, their sublimest happiness, shall consist in this, that they may behold the glory of Christ, John 17, 24, and themselves may glorify Him forever and ever. 2 Tim. 4, 18.—Moreover, while adoring their King in all His heavenly, divine glory, they shall also become partakers of His glory, 1 John 3, 2; they shall be “glorified together” with Him, Rom. 8, 17, such being “the glory which shall be revealed in” them that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared” therewith.—Thus in this “heavenly kingdom,” 2 Tim. 4, 18, Christ shall reign as the King of Glory over His Christians, who shall themselves be glorified through Him, and who shall forever rejoice in, and adore, His glory. Therefore, this kingdom is called the “Kingdom of Glory.”

Christ’s Kingdom of Glory, therefore, consists “*in this, that He . . . finally leads His Church to glory.*” Qu. 142.

The kingly office of Christ, then, consists “*in this, that He mightily rules over all creatures, and especially governs and protects His Church and finally leads it to glory.*” Qu. 142.

**CONCLUSION.**—We have now briefly discussed the three-fold office of Christ. We have learned to know Him as our Prophet, who reveals Himself unto us as our Savior; as our Priest, who has made reconciliation for us before God; as our King, who, ruling over all creatures with special consideration for the welfare of His own, bestows upon us grace here in time and glory in eternity. Therefore, with hearts filled with love and adoration for Him, we gratefully call Him “*our Lord,*” “*my Lord.*”

#### B. The Two States of Christ. Qu. 143—166.

**INTRODUCTION.**—We have now discussed these words of the Second Article: “And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,” together with their explanation: “I believe that

Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord." From these words we have learned who Christ is, and wherein His work consists. We have seen that He is true God and true man, our Prophet, Priest, and King. The following words of the Second Article read: "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." These words describe the various stages in Christ's performance of His office. And as we consider them, we find that they may be divided into two groups. The one group (beginning with Christ's conception and ending with His burial) shows us Christ in a state of humility and lowliness; the other group (beginning with His descent into hell and ending with His coming to Judgment) shows Him in a state of majesty and glory, or of exaltation. Accordingly, we distinguish *two states* in Christ's performance of His office, "*the state of humiliation and the state of exaltation.*" Qu. 143. These two states we shall now discuss, speaking first of the *State of Humiliation.*

### I. THE STATE OF HUMILIATION. Qu. 143—159.

#### *Wherein It Consists. Qu. 143—149.*

1. We have previously heard that, when Christ became man, "the Son of God received the human nature into His person, and that, in this one Person, each of the natures partakes of the properties of the other." Qu. 135. In this personal union, therefore, the human nature partakes of the properties which essentially belong to the divine nature, such as omniscience, omnipotence, etc. These attributes do not belong to the human nature as such, but in the personal union of the natures in Christ they are given, or "*communicated, to His human nature.*" The aggregate, or sum, of all the divine attributes of Christ is called His "divine majesty." Therefore "*divine majesty*" was "*communicated to His human nature.*" Qu. 144.

2. Now, the Second Article teaches us that Christ "humbled Himself," Phil. 2, 8, that is, that He became humble, or lowly, that He entered a lower state, or condition. This state is called the "State of Humiliation." For "state of humiliation" means "state of being lowly, or humble." In this state, as we shall see, Christ bore poverty, pain, enmity,

persecution, and a shameful death.—The question, then, arises, Did Christ, in the state of humiliation, have full possession of the divine majesty communicated to His human nature? Did He indeed, also in His state of humiliation, possess the divine nature, or did He lay this aside for the time being?

That Christ, also in the state of humiliation, was true God, and that He was in full possession of the divine nature—in other words, that He was also in this state the God-man, having at His disposal all the attributes of the divinity as well as of the humanity—is clearly taught in the Scriptures. Thus in Phil. 2, 6, we are told that he was “in the form of God” and “equal with God.” The “form of God” is not “the nature of God.” But one’s form is the appearance or the manifestations whereby we know him. The “form of God,” therefore, consists in those acts, attributes, manifestations whereby we know God. It consists in those things which we find in God only, so that he in whom they are found is known of a certainty to be God. If, then, Christ was “in the form of God,” if He manifested such attributes as can be found in God only, it is evident that He was true God. And this was the case in the days of His humiliation, when He “humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Phil. 2, 8.—The same is expressed by the words “equal with God.” For He who is equal with God is Himself true God.—This “form of God,” this being “equal with God,” is indeed found with Christ as He lived among men in the state of humiliation. Thus He changed water into wine at the marriage in Cana. John 2, 11. He raised Lazarus from the dead. John 11, 40. And even in those dark hours of His deep humiliation, beginning with His agony in Gethsemane, as He was about to suffer Himself to be led away a prisoner, He hurled His foes to the ground by His mere statement, “It is I,” John 18, 6, and by His mere touch healed the ear of the high priest’s servant, which Peter had cut off, Luke 22, 51. In these and all His other miracles, He “manifested forth His glory,” John 2, 11, “the glory of God,” John 11, 40, “His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father,” John 1, 14. These manifestations of His divine glory constitute the “form of God” whereof St. Paul speaks. Thereby He revealed Himself as being “equal with God.”—Thus also in the state of humiliation, Christ was in full power and possession of “the divine majesty communicated unto His human nature.” Qu. 144. And hence His humiliation did not consist in this, that He divested Himself of His divine nature or of His divine attributes.

3. Wherin His humiliation did consist appears from the words, He "*thought it not robbery to be equal with God.*" "Robbery" here describes what we would now call "the spoils of war," flags, arms, etc., which soldiers capture in war from the enemy. When victorious warriors return to their own people, they do not conceal these spoils, but rather display them, pride themselves with them, and glory in them. But Christ did not ordinarily display His divine majesty as warriors display the spoils of war; He "*thought it not robbery to be equal with God.*" He laid aside the constant use of those attributes which would have won for Him the acclaim of men; He "*made Himself of no reputation.*" Instead of displaying the "form of God," He "*took upon Himself the form of a servant*"; He died and suffered those things whereby a servant is known. Instead of displaying His likeness of God, He "*was made in the likeness of men,*" bearing enmity, and adversity, and suffering, "*being found in fashion as a man.*" While being the most high God, He "*humbled Himself,*" etc.—Herein, then, did Christ's state of humiliation consist, that, while He was true God always, and while at times He showed rays of His divine glory, He "*did not always and not fully use the divine majesty communicated to His human nature.*" Qu. 144.

4. In the person of Christ there are two natures, the divine and the human. He, the God-man, humbled Himself. But this humiliation did not take place according to the divine nature. For the nature of God is ever the same. Ps. 102, 27. It was "*according to His human nature,*" Qu. 144, which had been received into the divine person, that He became like unto other men, that He humbled Himself.

Thus Christ's state of humiliation consisted "*in this, that Christ, according to His human nature, did not always and not fully use the divine majesty communicated to His human nature.*" Qu. 144.

### *The Stages of the State of Humiliation.*

The Second Article summarizes the history of Christ in His state of humiliation in the following words: "*Conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried.*" Qu. 145.

a. "*Conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary.*"

1. Jesus was conceived and born of Mary. His mother is called the "*Virgin Mary.*" Qu. 146. She is called a virgin because she was a chaste, unmarried woman. Jesus, there-

fore, had Mary for a mother; but He had no father among men. He is the only child ever born upon earth with whom this is the case. He was "the Seed of the woman," whom God had promised unto men. Gen. 3, 15.

How this wonderful conception and birth was brought about is seen from Luke 1, 35. The Holy Ghost came upon her; the power of the Highest overshadowed her. In causing Jesus to be born of a virgin, God departed from the very course of nature. Such work of God outside the course of nature is called a miracle, or a *miraculous work.*" Qu. 146. And this miracle was wrought in Mary by the Holy Ghost. — Hence "*Christ was by the miraculous working of the Holy Ghost conceived . . . by the Virgin Mary.*" Qu. 146.

Yet He was conceived and born a true human child, a true human son. Is. 9, 6. He has, indeed, become our brother, taken upon Himself our own human flesh. He has become "*a true man.*" Qu. 146.

Thus when we say: "Conceived by the Holy Ghost," Qu. 145, we thereby confess "that Christ was by the miraculous working of the Holy Ghost conceived a true man by the Virgin Mary." Qu. 146.

2. We have already heard "that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, a true man." Qu. 147. The history of the birth of Christ is recorded in Luke 2, 1—14. As we contemplate it, we note especially the conditions of poverty amid which He was born. His parents were poor; the surroundings amid which He was born breathed poverty; His first garments were such as only poverty would provide; and His first resting-place was devoid of even the most ordinary comforts. Moreover, the whole life upon which He here entered was a life of poverty. Matt. 8, 20.

Thus the words, "*Born of the Virgin Mary,*" Qu. 145, express this, "*that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, a true man, and in great poverty.*" Qu. 147.

3. Christ's conception and birth as a true man were indeed stages in His state of humiliation. But His humiliation did not consist in this, that He became man; otherwise He must have put off His human nature when afterwards He was exalted. It consisted rather in the manner in which He took upon Himself the flesh of man, and in the circumstances under which He did so, *viz.*, that He was conceived and born of a human being who was but His own creature — and a sinful creature, at that — and that He was born in poverty, the poorest among the poor.

4. By His conception and birth, Christ has sanctified our conception and birth, and made reconciliation for the sin

which attends us at our entrance into the world. We should have been conceived and born in righteousness, but in fact were conceived in iniquity and born in sin, Ps. 51, 5, thus being defiled by sin from our very first beginnings. Christ came, conceived by the Holy Ghost, without sin, and born a "Holy Thing." Luke 1, 35. His holiness in His conception and birth is accounted unto us as our holiness.

b. "Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead." Qu. 145.

1. Christ suffered. Suffering did, indeed, attend Him all the days of His humiliation. (Circumcision, fasting, poverty, enmity, etc.) But it reached its culmination during His great Passion "*under Pontius Pilate.*" Qu. 148.

During this time, Jesus suffered in His body. He was scourged and crowned with thorns; He bore the heavy cross on His raw and bleeding shoulders; He was nailed to the cross and suspended by the nails in His hands; He thirsted; etc. All these things caused suffering, great suffering,—such tortures as the tongue of man cannot fully describe. Christ "*suffered unspeakable tortures of body.*" Qu. 148.

But the greater sufferings were those of the soul. He felt the curse of our sin, and tasted all the bitterness of the curse of God. (Gethsemane; on the cross.) He felt the grief caused by the hatred of those for whom He was dying, Ps. 109, 3—5, by the betrayal of Judas and the denial of Peter. These were sufferings of the soul—such sufferings as not even the imagination of man can fathom, much less the tongue of man express. "*He suffered unspeakable tortures of . . . soul.*" Qu. 148.

Thus "*under Pontius Pilate He suffered unspeakable tortures of body and soul.*" Qu. 148.

2. Christ "was dead," Qu. 145; He died. He died the death of the cross. He was "hanged on a tree." This was the death which was inflicted on criminals. Therefore the cross upon which He died was called the "accursed tree," since it was the means of executing such as were "accursed of God." Deut. 21, 23.

Thus the Scriptures testify "*that under Pontius Pilate He suffered unspeakable tortures of body and soul, and died on the accursed tree of the cross.*" Qu. 148.

3. Christ "was buried." Qu. 145. Jesus having died, His body was laid into the grave, or sepulcher. But while man's body is laid into the grave to meet decay, Christ's body remained in the grave only until the third day, and was not suffered "to see corruption." Ps. 16, 10.

Thus Christ's "*sacred body was laid into the grave and*

*remained there to the third day without seeing corruption."*  
Qu. 149.

We have thus seen that Christ, in His state of humiliation, was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried." Qu. 145.

**CONCLUSION.**—Thus did Christ refrain from the use of His divine majesty in the state of His humiliation. Thus did He humble Himself, bearing shame and agony. And if we seek the cause of all this, we will find it in the infinite love wherewith He has loved us, a love which readily and willingly made every sacrifice in order to deliver us from the everlasting curse.

### *The Purpose for Which Christ Humbled Himself.*

Qu. 150—158.

**INTRODUCTION.**—We have seen wherein Christ's humiliation consisted, and have briefly discussed the various stages in the state of humiliation which are mentioned in the Second Article. We have heard also that Christ, even at the time of His greatest humiliation, was "in the form of God," "equal with God." Hence He was not humbled because He could not escape humiliation. Rather, "*He humbled Himself.*" Phil. 2, 8.—If, then, He did not suffer of necessity, or by compulsion, but of His own free will, He had some purpose in view in descending to such depths of suffering and woe. This purpose of Christ's humiliation is clearly and beautifully set forth in the words of the explanation of the Second Article: "I believe that Jesus Christ . . . is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death." Qu. 127.—With these words as our guide, we shall now speak of the *purpose of Christ's humiliation*.

I. "*Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me.*" Qu. 150. 158.

a. I was "a lost and condemned creature." Qu. 150.

1. I was "a lost . . . creature." The significance of this term may be gathered from the Parable of the Lost Sheep. Luke 15, 4—7. This sheep had strayed away from the shepherd, and was now roaming about in the wilderness, a sure prey to the wolves or to hunger and thirst. It was helpless; for though it might seek to return, it could but become the more confused and bewildered and wander only the farther

away from safety. Left to itself, it must perish.—Thus it was also with me. Though man was made in the image of God, “in blissful knowledge of God, and in perfect righteousness and holiness,” Qu. 117, he had in Adam, Rom. 5, 12, fallen into sin, and had thereby lost the divine image. Qu. 118. Hence also I was sinful even as I entered the world, and by my daily sins and shortcomings my plight was made constantly worse. My sins had separated between me and my God. I was “without God in the world.” Eph. 2, 12. I was *lost* unto God. Yea, I was *hopelessly* lost. I was “dead in trespasses and sins,” Eph. 2, 1, unable to know my God, or to will to return unto Him. Having become disobedient, I was in the power and bondage of the devil, “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Eph. 2, 2.—Thus I was “*a lost . . . creature*,” Qu. 150, lost unto God, and in the power of the devil.

2. I was “*a . . . condemned creature*.” Qu. 150. Punishment of sin had been threatened even before sin entered into the world. Gen. 2, 17. That punishment was death, temporal and eternal death. And after sin had entered into the world, the sentence of such punishment was upon all sinners. “Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the works of this Law to do them.” Deut. 27, 26. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Ezek. 18, 20. And since I had sinned, this was the sentence which was pronounced upon me. I had been sentenced; I had been condemned—condemned to die the temporal and the eternal death. Everlasting damnation was my lot. I was condemned to be the prey of the devil, whose own I had become through sin.—I was “*a . . . condemned creature*.” Qu. 150.

Thus I was “*a lost and condemned creature*,” Qu. 150, that is, I had wandered away from God and become a slave of sin and Satan, and I was sentenced forever to suffer the torments of the “fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” Matt. 25, 41.

b. “Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me.”

1. Christ has “*redeemed*” me. Qu. 150. To redeem means to buy back. Hence this expression is further elucidated in the explanation of the Second Article by the words, “Jesus Christ . . . has . . . purchased and won me.” I was lost unto God; but Christ has again bought, purchased, me, so that I again belong unto God. I was in the power of sin, death, and the devil; Christ has paid the price which has set me free. This was His object when He “took upon Himself the form of a servant,” Phil. 2, 7, namely, “to *redeem* me.” Qu. 150.

2. Christ has redeemed "me." Qu. 150. I confess that "Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed *me*." I do not mention the fact that He has died for others. The reason why I do not mention this fact is because to believe the redemption of others will not save me. Neither will my faith save others. "Every one must believe for himself." Qu. 108. If I would be saved, therefore, I must believe that "Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed *me*." But what right have I to claim the redemption through Christ as my redemption?

The Bible does not mention me as being one of the redeemed by the name by which I am known among men. But it does tell me that, no matter who I am or how grievously I have sinned, Christ has redeemed me; for He has redeemed *all* sinners.—In Matt. 18, 11 we read: "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." All mankind was lost. Rom. 3, 23. Hence Christ is come to save *all*. I, too, was one of those who were lost. Therefore, it is certain He came to save *me*.—In John 1, 29, Christ is called "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the *world*." The world embraces all mankind. All mankind had sin; but Christ came to take away the sin of all mankind. I am one of those who are called "the world" and who had sin. Hence He takes away *my* sin.—In 1 John 2, 2 Christ is called "the propitiation for our sins and . . . also for the sins of the *whole world*." "To propitiate" means "to restore friendship by making amends for injury." (Thus Abimelech propitiated Abraham, Gen. 20, 14—16.) Propitiation, therefore, is that which is given to make amends. Christ is the "propitiation for our sins," that is, He gave Himself to God in order thus to make amends for our sins and to restore unto us the friendship of God. He is "the propitiation for *our* sins," that is, for the sins of the Christians. But He is also the propitiation "for the sins of the *whole world*," including the ungodly. Hence, though I have been ungodly always, I may nevertheless, with sorrow over my sins, but also with firm confidence in His grace, turn for help unto Christ, knowing that He "has redeemed *me*."—In 2 Pet. 2, 1 we read of such as "bring upon themselves swift destruction," that is, of such as finally perish forever in hell-fire. But even these do not perish because Christ has not redeemed them. Nay, He *has* "bought them," paid for them, given His blood as purchase money. They belong unto Him, even though they should deny it a thousand times, and though they should curse their lawful Master for having bought them. The only reason why they perish is that, though He is their Lord who has bought them, they deny Him. They refuse

to recognize Him. And when He calls and pleads with them, they act as though His words do not concern them. If, then, even such as finally perish have been redeemed, I know that, no matter how near I may have strayed to the very brink of damnation, I may still find forgiveness with Christ. For He has redeemed *all*—He “has redeemed me.”

This, then, is the purpose for which Christ has humbled Himself, namely, “*to redeem me, a lost and condemned creature,*” Qu. 150,—“*me and all lost and condemned mankind.*” Qu. 158. And therefore I may confidently confess: “*I believe that Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me.*”

*II. I believe that Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me . . . from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil.*”

These words teach us from what Christ has redeemed us by His humiliation, namely,

a. “From all sins.”

1. The law “tells us how we are to be and what we are to do and not to do.” Qu. 7. It makes demands upon us and reinforces them by the threat of punishment. We have, however, failed to meet the requirements of the Law. Thereby we have become liable to punishment. This liability to punishment for failure to obey the Law is called guilt. And this guilt must continue as long as the demands of the Law have not been satisfied.—But we have already heard that Christ has come and “perfectly fulfilled the Law,” Qu. 141, and that He has not done this because it was required of Him, but “to redeem them that were under the Law.” Gal. 4, 5. His perfect fulfilment of the Law is given unto us. And being possessors of a perfect obedience,—the obedience of Jesus Christ,—we can now offer the Law all that it asks of us. And being thus able to satisfy all the demands of the Law, we are freed from the guilt which failure to fulfil the Law entails. Thus Christ “*has freed me from the guilt . . . of sin.*” Qu. 152.

2. We had violated the Law. And violation of the Law demands punishment. This punishment is the curse, Deut. 26, 27, the loss of God’s favor, the pangs of hell. If we were to bear this curse, we must suffer forever. But from this punishment Christ has delivered us. He “hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law.” Gal. 3, 13. He “was made a curse.” The curse which should have come upon us was laid upon Him, a curse so great that, as it were, He was hidden beneath it. He was made a curse “for us,” in our stead. He bore our curse all the days of His life upon earth.

But it became especially apparent at His death upon the cross. "For it is written: Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." And since the punishment which should have come upon us has been inflicted upon Him, we need no longer bear it. — Thus by His suffering and death "*He has freed me from the . . . punishment . . . of sin.*" Qu. 152.

3. In yet another way has Christ redeemed me from sin. In 1 Pet. 1, 18, 19 Christians are reminded that they have been redeemed from their "vain conversation." Conversation here means walk, conduct, manner of life. Their former manner of life was "vain," that is, empty, worthless. It was worthless in its spiritual aspect, worthless before God; for it was a life of sin, and of sin only. All their thoughts, words, and deeds were unclean before God. Even when they outwardly performed works which were right and proper, their motives were sinful, and thus their works were but the fruits of sinful motives. Neither could they do anything that was not sinful. Even when the brazen evil-doer among them "reformed," that very reform was sin. Thus the thief might become an honest man, and the drunkard sober. But without Christ the cause of this change could not be love and gratitude toward God. It was rather a desire to escape the consequences of his vices, to gain the respect of men, or at best to *earn* the favor of God. That change was merely a change in the form of sin. Formerly he had served the devil of dishonesty or drunkenness; now he serves the devil of selfishness or of self-righteousness. Thus, whatever men did without Christ they did in the service of sin. This conduct was "vain conversation." And it could not be otherwise. This was the conversation which alone they could receive and had received "by tradition from the fathers." Tradition is the transmission, the handing down, the inheritance, from fathers to their children. The fathers were sinful; and hence the children were born into the world filled with every sin and evil inclination (original sin), completely under the power of sin. — This power, or rule, of sin is called "*the dominion of sin.*" Qu. 152.

But Christ has freed us from the guilt and punishment of sin. The heart which has known the sweetness of this freedom is filled with love and gratitude toward God, and can now do the works which are pleasing to God from love and gratitude toward Him. It can perform good works from godly motives. It is free from the dominion of sin. — Thus Christ "*has freed me from the dominion of sin.*" Qu. 152.

We have learned, then, that Christ "*has freed me from the guilt, the punishment, and the dominion of sin.*" Qu. 152.

4. This redemption from sin is a perfect redemption. Christ has suffered and died for *all* my sins. There is none so great or so small, none so evident or so hidden, as not to be included here. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin." 1 John 1, 7.

Therefore we joyfully confess: "*I believe that Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me . . . purchased and won me from all sins.*"

b. "From death."

1. "The wages of sin is death." Rom. 6, 23. "Death passed upon all men for that all have sinned." Rom. 5, 12. Temporal death was the wages of sin. But temporal death was not the entire punishment. It was but the doorway to eternal death, that is, of banishment from the presence of, and the communion with, God, of indescribable misery and woe. Man justly stood in fear of this punishment of sin. The fear of death held him in bondage, in slavery. He was like a slave who fears his master's lash because of his misdeeds, and who anxiously tries to escape it, but finds all his efforts futile. Therefore St. Paul tells us that men "through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. 2, 15.

2. But Christ has redeemed us from death. For He is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1, 29. His blood "cleanseth us from *all* sin." 1 John 1, 7. If, then, sin is taken away, its punishment also must cease. And since death is the wages of sin, there can be no more death where there is no more sin. Those who are in Christ do not die.

This is true with regard to eternal death. The true believers are not separated from God's presence, nor shut out from communion with Him; on the contrary, they shall be with God, and shall see His face forevermore in undisturbed peace and happiness. They shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, Matt. 25, 34, that kingdom which was prepared for them before sin and death held sway. Thus, since Christ has redeemed me, "*eternal death has no longer any power over me.*" Qu. 153.

Christ has also redeemed me from temporal death. True, I must still die the temporal death. And outwardly, temporal death with Christ may not seem to differ from death without Christ. But nevertheless it is vastly different. For without Christ it was the doorway to eternal death; but with Christ it is the door to eternal life; no longer the beginning of eternal woe and misery, but of eternal bliss;

no longer the beginning of banishment, but rather the beginning of sweetest union and communion with our God. A death such as this is no death, and therefore no longer to be feared.— This is a fruit of Christ's redemption, that "*I need not fear temporal death.*" Qu. 153.

This liberation from the fear of death is the purpose of Christ's humiliation. Heb. 2, 14, 15. He became partaker of flesh and blood in order that He might die, and "through death . . . deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." — This purpose has been accomplished. For "Christ hath . . . brought life . . . to light," 2 Tim. 1, 10, perfect and never-ending life. He "hath brought . . . immortality to light"; He "hath abolished death," eternal death and temporal death, since even temporal death is no longer truly death to those who are in Christ.

Thus Christ has redeemed me from death, inasmuch as "*I need not fear temporal death, since eternal death has no longer any power over me.*" Qu. 153.

Therefore I can joyfully confess: "*I believe that Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me, . . . purchased and won me . . . from death.*"

#### c. "From the power of the devil."

1. Man was in the power of the devil. Satan had gained power over man through sin. It was Satan who had tempted man to disobey God. Man yielded to the temptings of the devil. And as a result, man must finally depart "into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. 25, 41. That is precisely what Satan intended. And having thus forged his chains upon man, he lays claim to him. He accuses man of sin as proof that man should share his fate forever.— Thus Satan establishes his claim to man by *accusing him of sin.*

Again, through sin man has lost the image of God, has lost also the *holiness* which was a feature of this divine image. Man now by nature no longer loves what is good, and hates what is evil. On the contrary, he loves what is evil, and hates what is good. His will is not in the control of God, but of the devil. A wise owner of slaves allots to each such a task as is best suited to his natural gifts and inclinations. Some he appoints for menial and unclean work; others he arrays in shining liveries to wait upon his table. Yet all are performing the work of slaves and serving the selfsame master. So the devil wisely appoints his slaves for work best suited to their inclinations. Hence some wallow in the gutter in open shame, while others are arrayed in the splendor of purely human virtues and good-fellowship or of self-

righteousness (thus being the better able to add luster in the sight of men to the kingdom of Satan, and by word and deed to lead men astray). But whatever their work, they are servants of the prince of darkness. And, as we have already seen, even their outwardly commendable works are the fruits of sinful aims and motives. While able to control, to some extent, outward acts, they are unable with their hearts *to withstand the temptations of Satan.*

Thus I, too, was in the power of the devil, inasmuch as he could accuse me of sin, and as I could not withstand his temptations.

2. From this bondage of Satan Christ has set me free.

He came to vanquish the devil. Gen. 3, 15. He is the Seed of the woman, who was to bruise, that is, to crush, the head of the serpent, inflict a mortal wound upon him, so that he could no more harm or destroy man, while Christ Himself should suffer the bruising of His heel—receive a painful, but not mortal wound. This battle occurred upon Mount Calvary. Christ's heel was bruised; He suffered more than man can ever comprehend. But He lives to see the fruits of His victory. But Satan received a mortal wound; His power to drag man into hell-fire is ended. For through Christ's suffering and death, man's sin is taken away, so that we stand sinless in the sight of God. Therefore Satan can no longer say that we belong to him, that our sin stamps us his own. He can no more accuse us. This was the purpose of Christ for which He died, "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Heb. 2, 14.

Hence Christ "*has overcome the devil and conquered him, so that he can no more accuse me.*" Qu. 154.

But Christ has given me freedom also from the service of the devil.—The evidence of the devil's lordship over man is found in this, that man does the works of the devil. "He that committeth sin," wilfully walks in sin, "is of the devil." 1 John 3, 8. Without Christ, Satan controlled man's very will. But "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil," 1 John 3, 8, bring to an end man's obedience to Satan. Through the knowledge of the forgiveness of our sins in Christ and of freedom from eternal punishment, we have received strength to will not to sin, and daily more fully to put off sin. In Christ we can *withstand the temptations of Satan.* And though he still attempts to enslave us once more, and though we may feel the intensity of the struggle and our own weakness, by the power of the death of Christ we can still gain

the victory. Since Christ “*has overcome the devil and conquered him, . . . I can now victoriously withstand his temptations.*” Qu. 154.

Thus Christ “*has overcome the devil and conquered him, so that he can no more accuse me, and I can victoriously withstand his temptations.*” Qu. 154.

Therefore I can joyfully confess: “*I believe that Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me, . . . purchased and won me . . . from the power of the devil.*”

*III. “Not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.”*

a. Christ has redeemed us, bought us back. He has paid a price for us. These words speak of the price wherewith Christ has ransomed us, namely:

1. “Not with gold or silver.” Gold and silver are esteemed precious in the sight of men. And in estimating earthly treasures, their value is stated in the comparative value of these metals. But when our souls were to be bought, gold and silver were insufficient. Ps. 49, 6—8. For they are “corruptible things,” 1 Pet. 1, 18, things which pass away. Our souls must be bought with a price which has everlasting value. For this reason we were redeemed “*not with gold or silver.*” Qu. 155.

2. Our redemption was effected by the “*blood of Christ.*” 1 Pet. 1, 19. Not as though the shedding of His blood were all that Christ has done for us. All that He has suffered and all that He has done in His state of humiliation was necessary for, and instrumental in, effecting our deliverance. But the culmination of it all, that whereby we may know how much our salvation has cost Him, the greatest sacrifice that could be offered, is His death, the shedding of His blood.—The blood of Jesus is said to be “*holy . . . blood.*” For He was not only without sin in thought, word, and deed, “a Lamb without blemish and without spot,” 1 Pet. 1, 19, but “*holy,*” in His inmost heart loving only what is good and hating all that is evil.—It is, furthermore, said to be “*precious blood,*” 1 Pet. 1, 19, that is, blood of great price, or value. For if even man’s blood is precious, Gen. 9, 5, 6, the blood of Christ is infinitely more precious. For it is the blood of the Son of God, 1 John 1, 7, the blood of God. This alone, being “*precious blood*” even in comparison with the blood of man, was of sufficient value to cleanse us “from all sin,” 1 John 1, 7.—How Christ gave His “*holy, precious blood*” for us is explained in the words, “*with His innocent suffering and death.*” He shed His blood when He suffered and died. And

He suffered *innocently*. For He had done no wrong. He was "a Lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Pet. 1, 19.

Thus Christ has redeemed me, "*not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.*" Qu. 155.

b. We have heard that we have been redeemed with Christ's "*holy . . . blood* and with His *innocent* suffering and death." Why, then, did Christ suffer and die if He was holy and innocent? We find this explained in 2 Cor. 5, 21. Christ "knew no sin"; He was by nature holy, and had never offended in thought, word, or deed. But God "made Him to be sin for us." We, all men, had sins. God took them from us and laid them upon Christ that He should bear them "for us." These sins were so many and so great that, in laying them upon Christ, God made Him not only sin-laden, but He "made Him to be sin." So great was the burden that, when it was laid upon Him, it covered Him completely and, as it were, hid Him from the sight of God. The Father saw no longer His Son, but only the sins which covered Him. The greatest criminal has never had as many sins as Christ. For He bore the sin of the world." John 1, 29. And God "made Him to be sin" in bitter truth and reality; He accorded unto Him the treatment which a sinner deserves. He punished Him with the full punishment which sin had deserved.—Thus Christ suffered and died for sin, for our sin which was laid upon Him, "for us." Christ bore the sin and the punishment as our Substitute. Another word for "substitute" is "vicar." Hence the suffering and death of Christ was the suffering of a "vicar," or "*vicarious* suffering," and His atonement was a "*vicarious* atonement."—But Christ having suffered and died, the sin which He had borne was canceled, and He who had been made to be sin was righteous again. This righteousness is given unto us "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." It is a righteousness so great that it covers us, hides us completely, so that God, looking upon us, no more sees us poor sinners, but only the righteousness which is given us. And again, we are made righteousness in truth and reality. For God now accords us the treatment which is due such as are free from sin. Thus have we been "made the righteousness of God in Him."—We see, then, that by His suffering and death Christ has, in my stead, satisfied the Law, which demanded punishment of my sin; "*Christ has rendered satisfaction for me.*" Qu. 156.

The same facts are stated in other words in Is. 53, 4. 5. Here again, Christ appears as our Substitute, in our stead

bearing grief and sorrows, and the chastisement, the punishment, which must be borne to secure peace with God for us. It was the punishment of my sins which He bore. "*He has paid the penalty for my guilt.*" Qu. 156.

Thus Christ's suffering and death has wrought my redemption because "*Christ has thereby rendered satisfaction for me and paid the penalty for my guilt.*" Qu. 156.

Therefore I joyfully and gratefully confess: "*I believe that Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me, . . . purchased and won me, . . . not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.*"

*IV. "Jesus Christ . . . is my Lord, who has redeemed me, . . . purchased and won me."*

Jesus Christ is my Lord. How He has acquired right and title to me is shown in the words:

1. "Who has *redeemed* me, . . . *purchased* . . . me." Both words imply that Christ has paid a price for me. That price is His blood. Rev. 5, 9. His blood is precious. 1 Pet. 1, 19. Its value is greater than the souls of all men together. Since, then, He has paid so great a price for me, I no longer belong to my former master, but to Him who bought me. "*He has redeemed me, . . . purchased . . . me, so that I am now His own, and He is my Lord.*" Qu. 157.

2. "Who has . . . *won* me." This word implies an effort, a contest, a struggle. In order that I might be His own, Christ has waged war against the serpent. Gen. 3, 15. In this battle His heel was bruised, that is, He suffered. It was a fierce struggle; His soul was in "travail," Is. 53, 11, that is, in great pain and fear, in anguish. It was an important battle; for upon the outcome of this battle depended the ownership of the souls of men.—Christ has won the battle; He has decisively defeated the serpent, crushed its head. Gen. 3, 15. Thereby He has won me. Ownership of me is the fruit of this victory, and of all the agony which He suffered in the strife. He now sees "of the travail of His soul," sees the fruit of His anguish. And He is satisfied; He has won all for which He fought; He has won me. "*Christ has . . . won me, so that I am now His own, and He is my Lord.*" Qu. 157.

Thus "*Christ has redeemed me, purchased and won me, so that I am now His own, and He is my Lord.*" Qu. 157.

Therefore I joyfully confess: "*I believe that Jesus Christ . . . is my Lord, who has redeemed me, . . . purchased and won me,*"

CONCLUSION.—We have thus discussed the purpose of Christ's humiliation, namely, the redemption of the world by His vicarious atonement. It is through the knowledge of this work—the knowledge of Him who by “the travail of His soul” has won us—that we are justified before God. For “by His knowledge,” by teaching men to know Him, “shall My Righteous Servant justify many.” Is. 53, 11. Ignorance or unbelief of this article means eternal damnation. But to know Christ in His vicarious suffering and death means eternal life and glory. Let us, therefore, ever more fully learn to know and embrace Him, to glory in Him, but also to glorify Him.

## II. THE STATE OF EXALTATION.

INTRODUCTION.—We have already heard that Christ has performed His office in two states. We have also discussed the nature, the various stages, and the purpose of Christ's humiliation. The Second Article, having spoken of the state of humiliation, proceeds to describe the state of exaltation. It does this in the following words: “*He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*” Qu. 160.

We shall now speak of *the State of Exaltation.*

Qu. 159—167.

### *Wherein It Consists.* Qu. 159.

a. In speaking of the state of humiliation, we have heard that, because of the union of the two natures in Christ, the attributes of His divine nature, which constitute His divine majesty, have been communicated to His human nature. And according to His human nature, He possessed them, had them at His disposal, also during His humiliation, so that He could have used them whenever He chose to do so. But though He could have used them at will, and at times did use them, He did not use them always or fully according to His human nature.

b. But now we read, Phil. 2, 9—11: “Wherefore God hath also highly exalted Him.” “Wherefore” refers to the words of the preceding verses, “He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Phil. 2, 5—8. See Qu. 144. God exalted Him because He had humbled Himself. He who was exalted was the same one that had humbled Himself—who was “in the form of God” and “equal with God,” hence true God; but who also could

humble Himself and die, hence was true man. The exaltation of Christ, therefore, *did not consist in the laying aside of His human nature.* Also in the state of exaltation Christ is eternally true God *and* true man.—Neither did it consist in a change of state or condition of the divine nature. For according to the divine nature Christ is God. And God cannot undergo any change.—Christ's exaltation rather consisted in a change of state, or condition, of that nature according to which He was humiliated, that is, of His human nature.—Hence Christ was exalted “*according to His human nature.*” Qu. 159.

c. Wherein Christ's exaltation according to His human nature consisted is seen also from Phil. 2, 9—11. “God . . . hath . . . given Him a name which is above every name.” God made the name Jesus greater, more glorious, than any other name, so great that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” The name of Jesus is now made to shine forth in divine glory in the sight of all creatures — of the angels and saints in heaven, of the godly and the ungodly upon earth, and of the devils and the ungodly in hell. They all must acknowledge that name as the name of God. This glory He might have displayed even in the state of humiliation; for He was even then “equal with God.” But He did not at that time use it fully and continually. Thus it was that an angel came to strengthen Him, men crucified Him, Satan assailed Him. But now the angels and all godly men worship Him, and even the devil and all the ungodly must acknowledge the glory of His name.—Hence His exaltation consists in this, “*that Christ, according to His human nature, fully and continually uses the divine glory*” communicated to His human nature.” Qu. 159.

d. Angels and godly men willingly acknowledge this glory now; ungodly men and the devils, however, rebel against it. But the devils and the ungodly in hell have long since been made to recognize it, as we shall see. (Christ's triumphant descent into hell.) And their rebellious resistance will be fully and finally broken at the last day. Then they shall be compelled to “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” This shall be done “to the glory of God the Father.” For He has exalted Christ; He has given Him divine glory. He also has given Him almighty power, Matt. 25, 18, so that He may enforce the Father's will, and by His power assert the glory given the name of Jesus by the Father.—Thus Christ now “fully and continually uses the divine” majesty “communicated to His human nature.” Qu. 159.

Thus we have seen that Christ now uses divine *glory* and divine *power*. However, divine glory and divine power imply all the other divine attributes, and together with them are called “*divine majesty*.” Therefore, Christ’s exaltation consists in this, “*that Christ, according to His human nature, fully and continually uses the divine majesty communicated to His human nature.*” Qu. 159.

*The Stages of Christ’s Exaltation.* Qu. 160—166.

A. “*He descended into hell.*” Qu. 161.

a. When did Christ descend into hell? We find the answer in 1 Pet. 3, 18, 19. “Christ was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” “The flesh” denotes His human nature; hence “the Spirit” here denotes His divine nature. Christ died according to His human nature, but was quickened, that is, made alive, by the power of His divine nature. “By which,” by the power of His divine nature, “also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.” The prison-house of spirits is hell. We here have the order in which these events followed. Christ, therefore, descended into hell according to body and soul on Easter morning before He left the sepulcher, but after “*having been quickened in the grave.*” Qu. 161.

b. For what purpose did Christ descend into hell?

1. When men or evil angels descend into hell, they go because they are sent thither to suffer for their sins. Some have said that Christ also descended in order that He might undergo further suffering for our sins. Accordingly, they have accounted Christ’s descent into hell humiliation. However, this assumption is erroneous. For Christ’s suffering came to an end when He died, as it is written, “He said, It is finished. And He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.” John 19, 30. *Christ did not descend into hell in order to suffer.*

2. The purpose for which He descended into hell is stated in Col. 2, 15. “Having spoiled principalities and powers,” we read. He had “spoiled,” that is, despoiled (Greek: stripped), disarmed them and deprived them of their possessions. This He had done by nailing the handwriting that was contrary to us to the cross, v. 14, by dying for us. “Principalities and powers” are the domains and rulers of hell. By suffering and dying He had so completely vanquished the powers of hell that they were deprived of their very arms and armor, unable to resist, helpless in His power. Now “He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it,” in the cross, by virtue of the victory on the cross. As the victor

appears in the midst of his helpless captives in their own fortress, Christ triumphantly appeared in the midst of the vanquished powers of hell. Thus Christ descended into hell in order to show, or "*exhibit, Himself to hell as its Conqueror, and to triumph*" over it. Qu. 161.

He showed Himself as Conqueror not to hell only, but also to the spirits of men. 1 Pet. 3, 19. 20 mentions especially those "spirits in prison which . . . were disobedient . . . in the days of Noah." Noah had preached to them, had warned them to seek salvation in the promised Messiah. They had turned a deaf ear to him, and thereby rejected Christ. Now Christ Himself preached to them, not forgiveness of sins,—this they had forfeited by the rejection of Christ while they lived,—but the justice of their damnation; for He whom they had rejected had proved Himself the Christ indeed.—Christ triumphed not over the devils only, but over the spirits of the ungodly as well. He "*triumphed over all His infernal enemies*," over all His enemies in hell. Qu. 161.

We have seen, then, that the Scriptures testify "*that Christ, having been quickened in His grave, exhibited Himself to hell as its Conqueror, and triumphed over all His infernal enemies*." Qu. 161.

All this we confess in the words, "*He descended into hell.*"

B. "*The third day He rose again from the dead.*"

Qu. 162. 163.

a. We consider first the fact of Christ's resurrection. Qu. 162.

1. We have heard the prophecy of Isaiah, chap. 53, 11: "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." These words clearly imply that Christ should live after His death, live to see the fruits "of the travail of His soul." Nor was it to be His soul only which should live. His body also should rise again. For it should not remain in the grave, nor "*see corruption.*" Ps. 16, 10. These prophecies have been fulfilled. The gospel histories tell us that the women on Easter morning found only the empty grave and the angel with the message, "*He is not here, for He is risen.*" Matt. 28, 6. He was alive once more in His body. And He had "*with (His) . . . body issued from His grave.*" Qu. 162.

2. His body had been laid into the grave on Friday, Mark 15, 42, and He rose again on Sunday morning, "*the first day of the week,*" Matt. 28, 1. Therefore He rose "*on the third day.*" Qu. 162.

3. Christ rose with His *real* body, a body which His disciples could handle and feel. Luke 24, 39; John 20, 27.

It was *His own* body, the same body which had been nailed to the cross; for it still bore the imprint of the nails and the wound of the spear in His side. John 20, 27. But though it was not a different body, it was now in a different state. Thus barred doors were no longer a barrier, John 20, 19, and it vanished and appeared in the twinkling of an eye, Luke 24, 31. 36. It was no longer bound by the laws of this nether world. It was no longer in the state of humiliation, but in the state of exaltation, and used fully the divine glory and power communicated unto it. It was a "glorious body," Phil. 3, 21, or a "glorified body." — Thus Christ rose "*with a glorified body.*" Qu. 162.

4. The fact of Christ's resurrection is established by abundant proof. While no mortal eye had seen Him in the act of leaving the grave, there was no doubt whatever in the minds of His very enemies that He had risen. Matt. 28, 11—15. His disciples, who, notwithstanding His promises that He would rise again, did not consider His resurrection within the range of possibility, Mark 16, 11. 13; Luke 24, 41; John 20, 24. 25, were assured of it, and all their doubts removed, by His visible appearance. He was seen by Mary Magdalene, Mark 16, 9; John 20, 11—18, by the three Marys, Matt. 28, 9, by the disciples of Emmaus, Mark 16, 12; Luke 24, 13—34, by the Eleven on Easter evening, Mark 16, 14; Luke 24, 36—43; John 20, 19—23, and again "after eight days," John 20, 26—29, by the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, John 21, by the Eleven at His ascension, Matt. 28, 16—20. Still other appearances are mentioned in 1 Cor. 15, 4—8. The resurrection of Christ, therefore, is attested by the fact that He "*showed Himself alive to His disciples.*" Qu. 162.

Thus the Scriptures testify "*that Christ on the third day victoriously and with a glorified body issued from the grave and showed Himself to His disciples.*" Qu. 162.

b. We shall now consider the comfort which the resurrection of Christ affords.—In discussing the comfort which we find in the resurrection of Christ, it is necessary, first of all, to bear in mind by whose power Christ was raised.—We have heard that in God there are three persons, but that these three persons are not three gods or three beings, but that they are one divine essence. Hence also Christ says: "I and My Father are one," John 10, 30, and again: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." John 14, 9. Therefore also the almighty power of the three persons is but one and the selfsame power. And whenever almighty power is used, it is the power of the Triune God. For which reason

all the works of God are works of the three persons, even though one person is especially prominent in some certain work. See Qu. 106. Therefore Christ expressly tells us that His own works are also the works of the Father. John 5, 17—19. And the Bible ascribes to Christ the works of the Father, as, for instance, the work of creation, Heb. 1, 10, and the work of preservation, Heb. 1, 3.—In like manner the Bible describes the work of the resurrection of Christ at times as the work of the Father, Rom. 6, 4; 1 Cor. 15, 15, and at other times as the work of Christ's own power, John 10, 17, 18; 2, 19. And we should with all our hearts believe both statements; for both facts have been written for our comfort and for the greater assurance of our faith.

aa. 1. The Father has raised up Christ.—Before the Council of the Jews the high priest had asked Jesus under oath whether he was “the Christ, the Son of God.” Matt. 26, 64. And when Jesus stated that He was, the high priest said, “He hath spoken blasphemy,” and the Council pronounced the sentence, “He is guilty of death.” Matt. 26, 65, 66. Thus *Christ was put to death because He had said that He was the Son of God.*—But on the third day God raised Him up again. He gave back to Christ the life which men had taken because He had said that He is the Son of God. Thereby the Father declared most emphatically that men should not have put Him to death for His assertion, that the punishment was unjust, that He was indeed the Son of God. By the act of raising Christ, the Father reaffirmed His words, “Thou art My Son.” Acts 13, 33.—This import of the resurrection of Christ is pointed out by St. Paul, Rom. 1, 4, when he says that Christ was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness,” that is, according to His divine nature, “by the resurrection from the dead.”

Thus the fact that the *Father raised Christ* is proof “*that Christ is the Son of God.*” Qu. 163.

2. Christ is risen by His own power. This is stated in John 2, 19. “I will raise it up.” Yea, He states also the time within which He would perform this work: “In three days.” On the third day we see His promise fulfilled. Christ has proved that He can lay down His life and take it again at His own will and pleasure. John 10, 18. But He who can do this must indeed be more than mere man; He must be almighty, must be the true God.—Thus, by rising from death by His own power, Christ has Himself proved the truth of His statement that He “*is the Son of God.*” Qu. 163.

The proof that Christ is the Son of God is thus set forth in His resurrection by the Father and by Christ Himself.

More proof is not needed. This is “conclusive evidence.” Qu. 163.

Hence Christ’s resurrection “*is conclusive evidence that Christ is the Son of God.*” Qu. 163.

bb. Christ had taught many things, and made many promises during His life upon earth. And, to the mind of man, what He had taught and what He had promised seemed incapable of proof or of fulfilment. The statement which seemed most incapable of fulfilment was His promise that on the third day He would by His own power exchange death for life. John 2, 19. But by His resurrection this statement has been proved true and this promise fulfilled. And He who has furnished this proof has thereby furnished conclusive evidence of the truth of all His words, and of His ability to keep all His promises.—Thus, by rising from the dead, Christ has furnished “*conclusive evidence . . . that His doctrine is true.*”

The resurrection of Christ, therefore, “*is conclusive evidence, 1. that Christ is the Son of God, and that His doctrine is the truth.*” Qu. 163.

cc. In Rom. 4, 25 St. Paul tells us that Christ “was delivered for our offenses.” He was given up to suffer and die for us, to be made a “sacrifice,” Qu. 163, for us. God Himself had “made Him to be sin for us,” 2 Cor. 5, 21, and had willed that He should suffer and die for our sins, Acts 2, 23. His object was “that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5, 21. His suffering and death was to be a “*sacrifice . . . for the reconciliation of man.*” Qu. 163, 2. He was to bear such suffering as would be sufficient to atone for our sins and make us righteous before God. Death was, as it were, a prison into which He was cast for our sins, and from which He was not to be released until sufficient punishment had been inflicted to satisfy the righteous Judge.—“If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain,” worthless; “ye are yet in your sins.” 1 Cor. 15, 17. For the fact that He who had become a prisoner in our stead was not yet released would be proof that the punishment is not yet sufficient to atone for our sins.—“But now is Christ risen from the dead.” 1 Cor. 15, 20. God the Father has raised Him. The Judge who had sentenced Him to die for our sins Himself has called Him forth from the prison of death. By this very act He declares that His justice is satisfied, that the punishment is sufficient, that He “*has accepted the sacrifice of His Son for the reconciliation of those whose sins He bore.*” Qu. 163, 2.—For this reason St. Paul says that Christ “was raised again for our justifi-

cation." Rom. 4, 25. By raising Christ, God has justified us. "To justify" means "to acquit, to declare innocent, free from guilt before the law." By raising Christ, God declared that all our sins have been sufficiently punished in Christ, and that, all our guilt having been borne, we are now free from guilt.— And since Christ had borne the sins of the whole world, the Father, by raising Him from the dead, has justified "the world," Qu. 163, 2, and hence certainly *also me*.

Thus the resurrection of Christ "*is conclusive evidence, . . . 2. that the Father has accepted the sacrifice of His Son for the reconciliation of the world.*" Qu. 163, 2.

dd. The end to which a Christian hopefully looks forward is eternal life, endless life after death. Christ Himself had promised that He would raise His own from death. Thus in the night in which He was betrayed, He assured His disciples that, though He would leave the earth with His visible presence, they should see Him again. "Because I live, ye shall live also." John 14, 19. And to Martha He said: "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." John 11, 25.— If, now, Christ had not risen, His failure to rise would have been proof that He is not God, and that He can deliver neither Himself nor others from death. "But now is Christ risen from the dead." 1 Cor. 15, 20. He has proved Himself to be the Lord of death. He is "the Resurrection"; wherever He is present, the dead must rise at His will. He is "the Life"; He has life "in Himself," John 5, 26, and He can give life to whomsoever He pleases, John 5, 21. He that believeth in Him "shall never die"; his temporal death is but a sleep from which Christ shall wake him.— The resurrection of Christ "*is conclusive evidence, . . . 3. that all believers shall rise unto eternal life.*" Qu. 163, 3.

We have thus seen why the resurrection of Christ is so comforting to us, namely, "*because it is conclusive evidence —*

*"1. That Christ is the Son of God, and that His doctrine is the truth;*

*"2. That God the Father has accepted the sacrifice of His Son for the reconciliation of the world;*

*"3. That all believers shall rise unto eternal life."* Qu. 163.

The resurrection of Christ is, indeed, the most comforting of the mighty works of God. For what by faith we hoped for at the manger and at the cross, is proclaimed, by the empty tomb, as having been brought to a successful conclusion and approved by God the Father Himself.

Therefore we joyfully confess: "*The third day He rose again from the dead,*"

*C. "He ascended into heaven."* Qu. 164.

a. After His resurrection, Christ "showed Himself alive" to His apostles, "being seen of them forty days." Acts 1, 3. Then having assembled them upon the Mount of Olives and given them His final commands, "while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." Acts 1, 9. Thus was fulfilled what had been prophesied in Ps. 68, 18.

*"Christ . . . visibly ascended on high."* Qu. 164.

b. Christ ascended "into heaven." Some have said that Christ thereby removed His bodily presence from earth according to His human nature. In Eph. 4, 10 we read: "He . . . ascended far above all heavens that He might fill all things." To "fill all things" is "to be present everywhere." (Compare Jer. 23, 24.) Hence Christ ascended into heaven in order to enter upon the use of divine *omnipresence*.— Again we read: "He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens." Christ descending into hell is, of course, the same person as Christ ascending. But St. Paul here has reference to the fact that He was the same also in manner and in purpose. Christ descended *triumphantly* in order to show Himself as conqueror to His infernal enemies, by His almighty power holding them in subjection. So also His ascent was a display of His almighty *power*. Therefore the Psalmist says that in His ascension Christ has "led captivity captive." "Captive" are they whom He has captured, His "infernal enemies." This is, of course, figurative language. Roman generals would lead conquered kings and rulers in their triumphal processions in order to show how complete their victory had been, to display their power. In like manner Christ ascended, using and displaying His *almighty power*.—In His humiliation Christ had and possessed omniscience, and omnipresence, and all other divine attributes, as we have seen. But He did not use them, and did not display them always and fully. But for this purpose He ascended, that He might now always and fully use and display almighty power and omnipresence, His full divine majesty.—The display of divine majesty is also called divine glory. Therefore ascending into heaven is also called entering into glory. Luke 24, 26. It is also spoken of as going to the Father, John 14, 12, because the glory into which Christ entered is the glory of the Father; Christ went to the Father, henceforth fully to use and to manifest the same majesty as the Father.—Christ "ascended into heaven," therefore, means, He "*entered into the glory of His Father.*" Qu. 164.

c. In His humility Christ did not always and not fully use His divine majesty. However, He was not humbled according to His divine nature, but according to His human nature only. So also He was exalted only according to His human nature. Now, His ascension was exaltation. Hence at His ascension Christ entered into the glory of His Father "*according to His human nature.*" Qu. 164.

d. Christ entered into the glory of His Father as our Savior. The work of redemption had been completed. But it is His will that we also should enjoy the fruits of His victory. "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." John 12, 26. Therefore the Psalmist says: "Thou hast received gifts for men." Ps. 68, 18. These gifts consist in His power to give to men salvation, and all that is necessary to receive and possess it, and so to lead and shield them that they may finally behold His glory which the Father has given Him. John 17, 24.—For this purpose, then, has Christ entered into the glory of His Father that He might so use His almighty power as to bring us safely unto Himself. He Himself expresses this in the words: "I go to prepare a place for you." John 14, 2.—Christ, therefore, entered into the glory of the Father "*there to prepare a place for us.*" Qu. 164.

We have seen, then, that the Scriptures testify "*that Christ, according to His human nature, visibly ascended on high, and entered into the glory of His Father, there to prepare a place for us.*" Qu. 164.

All this we comprehend in the words, "*He ascended into heaven.*"

D. "*And sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.*"

a. The Bible tells us that Christ "was received up into heaven, and sat *at the right hand of God.*" Mark 16, 19. Now, we have heard that God is a spirit, that is, "a rational being without a body." Qu. 104. Having no body, He has not hands such as we have. To speak of "*the right hand of God*" is, therefore, figurative speech.—The question, then, is, What is meant by "*the right hand of God*"? We use our hands, especially our right hand, to labor, to perform the works of our daily vocation. So also "*the hand of God,*" or "*the right hand of God,*" is the means whereby He performs His works, His mighty deeds. The Second Article indicates what this means when it says: "*Sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.*" God performs His great works by His almighty power. Therefore this almighty power of God is called His "*right hand,*" or also, the "*right*

hand of power." Matt. 26, 64. — The "right hand of God," then, is His almighty power, and all that it implies — His "*divine power and majesty.*" Qu. 165.

b. Christ "sitteth" at the right hand of God. — Some have imagined that Christ's session consists in an actual occupying of a seat, or throne, whereby His presence would be restricted to that locality in heaven, so that He is not present, according to His human nature, on earth, nor shall be until the last day. However, we have already seen that "the right hand of God" is a figurative expression. Hence "sitting at the right hand of God" must also be figurative language. What it is meant to convey is seen from the fact that the Bible also describes Christ's session as a sitting upon a throne. We say of a king that he is sitting upon the throne when we mean that he rules. So Christ is said to be sitting upon a throne when the meaning is "*He rules.*" And He sits upon His throne, He rules, "at the right hand of God," that is, "*He rules with divine power and majesty.*" Qu. 164. — This is clearly stated in Eph. 1, 20—23. The statement: "God hath set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places," is explained as meaning that God has set Him "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion," that is, above the angels of heaven, "and [above] every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," that is, in earth and in heaven. God has given Him power over all things, almighty power. The same thing is said once more in the words: "And hath put all things under His feet." In ancient times the vanquished foe would permit the victor to put his foot upon his, the vanquished foe's, neck, thereby indicating that he recognized that he was in the absolute power of the victor, helpless to resist any fate which the victor decided to inflict upon him. The statement that God has put all things under Jesus' feet, therefore, means that God has given Christ absolute, almighty power over all things in heaven and in earth. Hence Christ's session consists in this, that He "*with divine power and majesty rules . . . all things.*" Qu. 164. — Moreover, wherever Christ rules by His divine power and majesty, there He is *present* with His power and majesty. Therefore, as He rules over all things, He is present with all things; He "*filleth all in all,*" Eph. 1, 23, He "*fills all things.*" Matt. 17, 20; 28, 20. Qu. 164. — Therefore Christ's sitting is so far from implying that He is absent from any place in heaven or in earth that it rather expresses His presence everywhere in divine power and majesty. —

Thus Christ's sitting at the right hand of God consists in

this, "*that Christ . . . with divine power and majesty rules and fills all things.*" Qu. 165.

c. According to His divine nature Christ has not only always had such power and majesty, but He has also always exercised it, since He was not humiliated according to His divine nature. If, then, the Father now has "set Him at His own right hand . . . and hath put all things under His feet," this can have been done only according to His human nature. To the human nature this power and majesty was given when it was received into the divine person. Qu. 135. But in the state of humiliation, Christ, according to His human nature, did not always and not fully use it. But Christ being exalted, His human nature has full and constant part in the exercise of divine power and majesty. *According to His human nature* Christ has been set at the right hand of God. "*Christ, also according to His human nature, with divine power and majesty rules and fills all things.*" Qu. 165.

d. Christ is our Savior also while He is sitting at the right hand of the Father. God "gave Him to be the Head . . . to the Church, which is His body." Eph. 1, 22. 23. As the Head, Christ "*governs His Church,*" according to His grace supplying her with every needful gift in fullest measure. Eph. 4, 7—16. While He fills "all in all," He is present with His Church in special measure in the fulness of all His saving grace, so that the Church is directly called "the fulness of Him."—While He "*rules and fills all things,*" He "*especially governs . . . His Church, of which He is the Head.*" Qu. 165.

Under the government of Christ the Church is truly blessed within. But from without the enemies of Christ, unable to harm Him directly, assail Him in His body, the Church. But Christ, sitting at the right hand of the Father, is "over all," and by His almighty power controls their rage. And He will continue to curb their malice until they are His "footstool," Ps. 110, 1, until, lying prostrate before Him, they must permit Him to place His foot upon their necks. Thus His Church is safe; for Christ, sitting at the right hand of God, "*especially governs and protects His Church.*" Qu. 165.

Thus Christ's sitting at the right hand of God consists in this, "*that Christ, also according to His human nature, with divine power and majesty rules and fills all things, and especially governs and protects His Church, of which He is the Head.*" Qu. 165.

All of which we confess in the words: "*And sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.*"

*E. "From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead."* Qu. 166.

a. Christ is ever present with us with His power and with His grace. But His visible presence upon earth came to an end when He ascended into heaven. However, He will once more be seen by the eyes of men upon earth. This statement is in accord with the divine promise given to the apostles by the mouth of the angels at Christ's ascension. Acts 1, 11. The apostles had "seen Him go into heaven." He ascended visibly. He "shall so come in like manner." Men shall "see the Son of Man coming." Luke 21, 27. "*He will return visibly.*" Qu. 166.—When He came to earth the first time, He came in humility. But at His second appearance "the Son of Man shall come in His glory," with a full display of His divine majesty, attended by "all the holy angels," by His almighty power raising the dead and gathering all nations before Him "in the air." Matt. 25, 31. 32; 1 Thess. 4, 16. 17. Then every knee and every tongue will — either with joy or in despair, but without fail or exception — acknowledge Him the Lord, Phil. 2, 10. 11, so great will be His "glory." Qu. 166.

Thus "*He will return visibly and in glory.*" Qu. 166.

b. The purpose of His coming will be "*to judge.*" He has been "ordained," appointed, "of God to be the Judge." Acts 10, 42. According to His divine nature He has in Himself the power to execute judgment. But according to His human nature such authority is "given" unto Him "because He is the Son of Man." John 5, 29. Therefore St. Paul says that God will judge the world "by that *Man* whom He hath ordained." Acts 17, 31.—As the "Son of Man," Matt. 25, 31, "*He will return . . . to judge.*" Qu. 166.

c. He will come "*to judge the quick and the dead.*" In Matt. 25, 31 we read: "Before Him shall be gathered all nations." This will include "the quick," the living, those who will not have died before the time of His coming. 1 Thess. 4, 17. But it will include also "the dead," those who will have died. For "all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." John 5, 28. "*The quick and the dead,*" Acts 10, 42, all men who will ever have lived upon earth will be gathered before Him to be judged, 2 Cor. 5, 10. These are also spoken of as "the world." Acts 17, 31. Christ will return "*to judge the world.*" Qu. 166.

d. In Matt. 25, 31—46 Christ tells us how He will proceed in the judgment of that day. He will separate His sheep from the goats, placing the sheep at His right hand and the goats at His left. His sheep are those who hear His voice

and follow Him, John 10, 28, that is, those who believe in Him. The goats are the unbelievers. Having separated them, Christ will then announce His decision, a reward of eternal life for all believers and a sentence of eternal torment upon all unbelievers.—In giving eternal life to all believers and sending all unbelievers into everlasting torment, He will fulfil the word spoken by Him while on earth, as He has also said: “The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge Him at the last day.” John 12, 48. The sum and substance of this word is found in the statement: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark 16, 16. Now we have already heard (Qu. 104), that, when the Bible would express this, that God deals with every one in accordance with His Word, it says that God is just, or righteous. Therefore also the judgment of Christ in the last day, dealing with every one in accordance with the written Word, is called a “righteous judgment.” *Christ will “judge the world in righteousness.”* Acts 17, 31. Qu. 166.

We have heard that, in accordance with the written Word, men will be saved or condemned on the last day according to their faith or unbelief. Christ Himself can search the hearts of men, and therefore needs no outward evidence of their faith or unbelief; for which reason also He will separate believers from unbelievers before their works are mentioned. But after He will have separated them, He will vindicate His justice before men and before all the assembled hosts of heaven and of hell by revealing the works of men. For such as will have lived in unbelief to their end will be filled with evil works only. John 15, 5. And in order to prove publicly their unbelief, Christ will reveal their evil works, Matt. 25, 42—45, their evil words, Matt. 12, 36, yea, the most secret thoughts of their hearts, 1 Cor. 4, 5. All their thoughts, words, and deeds will become an open book before all at the judgment-seat of Christ, and will furnish public proof of their unbelief and of the justice of their condemnation.—On the other hand, such as will have lived in faith will through faith have performed works pleasing unto God, John 15, 5, while all their sins and the imperfections in their works of faith will have been washed away with the blood of Christ, leaving only what thoughts, words, and deeds are pure and holy. And these also will be revealed and made manifest by Christ, Matt. 25, 35—42; 1 Cor. 4, 5, thus proving their faith and the justice of Christ’s judgment. Thus public sentence will be pronounced upon every one according to “the things done in his body, according to that he

hath done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. 5, 10; and thus the word of Christ will be fulfilled, Mark 16, 16.

We learn, then, that Christ will come to judge according to His written Word — "to judge the world *in righteousness.*" Qu. 166.

e. The *day* of the coming of the Lord is called the "day of the Lord." 2 Pet. 3, 10. On that day the heavens and the earth will pass away, for which reason it is also called the "last day." John 6, 54. Hence we know that the Lord will return "*at the last day.*" Qu. 166. That day has already been appointed, Acts 17, 31, and the hour of the day has been chosen in the counsels of God. Mark 13, 32. But besides God none knows when it will come. Even the Son of God did not know it according to His human nature in the state of humiliation; much less has it been revealed to the angels or even to man. Mark 13, 32. And all predictions on the part of man as to "that day and that hour" will prove delusions in the future as they have been in the past. — However, two facts are to be remembered. On the one hand, God has given us *signs* whereby we are to know for a certainty that that day is approaching. See Matt. 24; 2 Thess. 2. And as we find that these signs are being fulfilled daily, we should prepare to meet our God. For while God does not reckon time as we do, 2 Pet. 3, 8, we know that the Lord *may* come at any time. If St. Peter in his day could say: "The end of all things is at hand," 1 Pet. 4, 7, we have much more reason to live a life of waiting for the coming of the Lord. — We have the more reason to prepare for that day because, on the other hand, that day will come entirely *unexpected* for mankind in general, and find them unprepared. Matt. 24, 36—41. It will come "as a thief in the night," 2 Pet. 3, 10; Matt. 24, 43, without warning, and without offering opportunity for special preparation. — "Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Matt. 24, 42. — We have heard, then, that the Lord will return, unexpected by mankind in general, "*at the last day.*" Qu. 166.

Thus the Scriptures teach "*that at the last day He [Christ] will return visibly and in glory to judge the world in righteousness.*" Qu. 166.

This we believe, and we confess our faith in the words: "*From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*"

**CONCLUSION.** — We have now discussed the statements of Luther's Small Catechism concerning Christ's state of exaltation. We have seen wherein His exaltation consists, and have considered the various stages in the state of exaltation. And we have seen that our exalted Lord also is still our

Savior, who in the full exercise of His majesty loves and remembers us, and who uses His almighty power in order to uphold, strengthen, and protect His own while they are upon earth, and finally to give to them the Kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

### CONCLUSION OF THE SECOND ARTICLE.

(Qu. 167.)

INTRODUCTION.—In discussing the state of Christ's exaltation, we have seen that our Savior according to His human nature entered upon the full and constant use of divine power and majesty, and that He employs such divine glory in giving and preserving unto us what by His suffering and death He has won for us. The benefits which we derive from Christ's exaltation—*the enjoyment of the fruits of His redemption*—are described in the words which form the conclusion of the Second Article.

#### I. "That I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom."

a. "*That I may be His own.*"—Without Christ we were in the possession of our enemies, of sin, and death, and the devil. Qu. 151. But through Christ we have been "*delivered out of the hand of our enemies,*" Luke 1, 74, so that they can no more lord it over us. Instead, we now belong to Him who has purchased us with His own blood. Acts 20, 28.—This was the end and aim of His suffering and death, the right which He maintains in His exaltation, "*that I may be His own.*" Qu. 167.

b. "*And live under Him in His kingdom.*"—We had been in the kingdom of Satan, a kingdom under the wrath of God. But having been "*delivered out of the hand of our enemies,*" and removed from the kingdom of the devil, we are now in the kingdom of Christ, a kingdom under the grace of God. We are "*in His kingdom.*" Qu. 167.—He Himself is the King in this Kingdom of Grace. As our King He provides us with the garments of His righteousness and with every needful gift for the true welfare of our souls. As our King He also *protects* us from the enemies of our souls until He finally leads us to glory. We live under His government and protection. Our Catechism says we "*live under Him.*" Qu. 167. And under His rule we have true life. In the kingdom of Satan we were under death. We were walking in spiritual death, which would have ended in eternal death. But in Christ's kingdom we have spiritual life upon earth,

and finally we shall have eternal life in the hereafter. Under Him we truly "*live.*" Qu. 167.

This was the end and aim of His suffering and death, the privilege which He would preserve unto me in His exaltation, "*that I may live under Him in His kingdom.*" Qu. 167.

## II. "And serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness."

a. Having made us citizens in His kingdom, Christ seeks at our hands the performance of the duties of citizens. As we were formerly doing the will of sin and Satan, we should now do the will of Christ. For this purpose has He died for us that we should "*live . . . unto Him,*" 2 Cor. 5, 15, all our thoughts, words, and deeds being devoted to His service. For this purpose did He deliver us out of the hands of our enemies, that we "*might serve Him.*" Luke 1, 74.

b. This service should be service in "*righteousness.*" Righteousnes is conformity with the Word of God. The Word of Christ, our King, should be the only rule for our conduct from without.—On the other hand, our only motive from within should be "*innocence,*" purity of heart. Our hearts should be filled with love of all that is in accord with the will of our King, and averse to all that displeases Him. This condition of the heart is also called "*holiness.*"—We should "*serve Him . . . in holiness and righteousness.*" Luke 1, 75. Our Catechism says: "*That I may . . . serve Him in . . . righteousness and innocence.*" Qu. 167.

c. This service is, furthermore, a *blessed* service, that is, a service wherein we are truly happy. For we are not slaves, who must fear the Master's lash because of their misdeeds. Our King Himself has taken our punishment upon Him for the purpose of freeing us from the fear of punishment. Neither need we fear the power of our enemies, of sin, death, and the devil. Our King has vanquished them, and protects us against them by His almighty power. The service which we render is rather love's sacrifice to Him who first loved us, 1 John 4, 19, a service sweet beyond degree, because it consists in yielding up ourselves entirely to the guidance of Him who loved us "*unto the end.*" John 13, 13.—For this purpose was Christ humbled and exalted, "*that I may . . . serve Him in . . . blessedness.*" Qu. 167.

d. This service in "*righteousness, innocence, and blessedness*" is to be a service without end. Here upon earth we are to serve our King. But the service rendered here, we well know, will ever remain imperfect in righteousness, imperfect

in innocence, and imperfect in the bliss, the pleasure which we take therein. For though, according to the new man, we strive for, and rejoice in, pure and perfect service, the old man with sins and evil lusts is still present with us. And therefore we must daily, with sorrow in our hearts, ask God for Jesus' sake to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, to purify our hearts, and to suppress our rebellious flesh. Rom. 7, 7—23. But we know that presently we shall be delivered "from the body of this death." Rom. 7, 24. And from that time forth we shall render service to Christ in *perfect* righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.—Hereunto has Christ saved us by His humiliation and exaltation, "that I may . . . serve Him in *everlasting* righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." Qu. 167.

e. By such walk in righteousness we are following Christ in the way which He has opened for us, as St. Paul shows. Rom. 6. Christ lived upon earth under sin, under *our* sin. This life under sin came to an end when He died. "In that He died, He died unto sin." Rom. 6, 10. Sin and death were by His death forever put away. When He rose, He rose to a new life unto God only, unto everlasting triumph over sin and death.—We are His own. He died in our stead; His death is our death. When we died in Him, we died unto sin. We should now reckon ourselves dead unto sin, no more letting sin rule in our mortal bodies, as St. Paul tells us. Rom. 6, 11, 12. But His resurrection is likewise our resurrection; when Christ rose unto a new life, we rose in Him. Rom. 6, 5. And as He now "*liveth unto God*," so we also should reckon ourselves "*alive unto God through Jesus Christ, our Lord*," Rom. 6, 10, 11, through Christ reigning in victory over sin to all eternity.

Thus we should "serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, *even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.*" Qu. 167.

CONCLUSION.—These are the benefits which Christ has won for me in His state of humiliation, and which the exalted Savior bestows upon me, that in His kingdom I enjoy His grace and His protection, and therefore rejoice to offer unto Him sweet service by thought, word, and deed. This knowledge is my hope, my joy, my buckler, and my shield in life and in death. And in the full assurance of this grace I joyfully confess: "This is most certainly true."

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## The Third Article. Of Sanctification.

### I. THE HOLY GHOST.

**INTRODUCTION.**—The First Article of the Creed speaks of the work of creation, that work which is ascribed especially to God the Father. It teaches that of His infinite goodness God has created man in His own image, and governs and preserves him.—The Second Article treats of the work of redemption, that work which is ascribed especially to God the Son. It teaches that, when man had lost the divine image and fallen into the power of sin, death, and the devil, the Son of God came to redeem, purchase, and win him.—There remains for our consideration one more divine work which also is necessary, because without this work we could not enjoy the benefits of Christ's redemption. This is the work of sanctification, of which the Third Article treats, and which is ascribed especially to the Holy Ghost.—In discussing the work of sanctification, the Third Article treats of five points, namely; “*1. Of the Holy Ghost; 2. Of the Church; 3. Of the Forgiveness of Sins; 4. Of the Resurrection of the Body; 5. Of the Life Everlasting.*” Qu. 170.—In discussing the first of these points, we shall speak: A. Of the person of the Holy Ghost and of the importance of His work in us; B. of the various operations which constitute the work of the Holy Ghost in our hearts.

#### A. Of the Person of the Holy Ghost and of the Importance of His Work in Us.

##### I. OF THE PERSON OF THE HOLY GHOST. Qu. 171—173.

A. a. We confess: “I believe in the Holy Ghost.” Qu. 171. To believe in Him means to place our inmost heart's trust and reliance in Him. Such confidence, however, belongs to God alone. Hence by confessing: “I believe in the Holy Ghost,” we confess that we regard Him as God. And for such confession we have ample warrant in the Bible.

1. St. Paul tells the Christians at Corinth, 1 Cor. 3, 16, that they are the temple of God. And he justifies this statement by referring to the fact that the Spirit of God, that is, the Holy Ghost, dwells in them. Thereby St. Paul expressly states that the Holy Ghost is God.—Likewise, in rebuking Ananias for lying to the Holy Ghost, St. Peter tells him that he has lied to God. Acts 5, 3. 4. Thereby he also directly

states that the Holy Ghost is God. — Hence we properly confess that the Holy Ghost is God because *the Bible expressly calls Him God.*

2. In the Bible record of the work of creation we have heard that “the Spirit of God,” the Holy Ghost, “moved upon the face of the waters.” Gen. 1, 2. That was a life-giving, creative moving. (Hebrew: “brooded,” as a bird on its nest in order to give independent life to its young.) Thus the Holy Ghost took part in the work of creation. This creative activity is mentioned also in Ps. 33, 6, where we are told that all the hosts of the heavens were made by the breath of the Lord’s mouth. In the original the word “breath” is used to denote a spirit. The heavens were made by the Spirit who proceeds from God, that is, by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost, therefore, took part in the work of creation. But the work of creation is a work of God, and hence the Holy Ghost is God. — It is right, therefore, that we should confess that the Holy Ghost is God, since *the Bible ascribes to Him the work of God.*

3. Again, in Ps. 139, 7—10 the Bible tells us that the Holy Ghost is omnipresent. For man cannot escape from the Spirit and presence of God. He dwells in heaven in eternal bliss and glory. He is present also in hell — not suffering, as are the condemned, but with His almighty power and majesty. And, again, though we should “take the wings of the morning,” that is, fly as fast as the light of morning wings its flight over the earth, and seek a hiding-place in the remotest parts of the sea, we could not escape from Him. He is *present everywhere.* — And in 1 Cor. 2, 10 St. Paul tells us that the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, “searcheth all things,” knows them fully and thoroughly. And He has such knowledge not only of created things; He searches also “the deep things of God,” the inmost secrets of the mind of God. If He has knowledge even of these, He certainly has knowledge of all things; He is *omniscient.* — But omnipresence and omniscience are divine attributes. Hence we are justified in confessing that the Holy Ghost is God because *the Bible ascribes to Him divine attributes.*

We find, then, that *the Bible ascribes to the Holy Ghost divine names, divine works, and divine attributes, and, hence, that He is “true God.”* Qu. 172.

b. In confessing that the Holy Ghost is true God, we are ascribing to Him what we already know holds good also with regard to the Father and the Son; for the Father is God and the Son is God. If, then, the Holy Ghost also is God, He is *“true God with the Father and the Son.”* Qu. 172.

c. But, as we have likewise seen, there are not three gods. There is only one God; but this one God is a triune God, that is, "three distinct Persons in one divine Essence." Qu. 105. And these three Persons are named in Matt. 28, 19. The Holy Ghost is here named in the third place as being God with the Father and the Son. We say that He is (not according to rank or degree, but according to the usual order of enumeration) "*the Third Person in the Holy Trinity.*" Qu. 172.

The Bible thus teaches that the Holy Ghost is "*the Third Person in the Holy Trinity, true God with the Father and the Son.*" Qu. 172.

B. The Third Person of the Trinity is known in the Bible by *various names*. We have already seen that He is called the "Spirit of God," 1 Cor. 3, 16; the "Holy Ghost," Acts 5, 3, 4; Matt. 28, 19; the "Breath of His mouth," Ps. 33, 6; or simply "the Spirit," 1 Cor. 2, 10. He is also called "the Spirit of Truth," John 15, 26, because He guides us "into all truth," John 16, 13, that is, teaches us to know the truth of the written Word. Christ often calls Him "the Comforter," John 15, 26, because in all dangers and tribulations He fills our hearts with the comfort of God's truth. — But the name which is used most frequently is "Holy Ghost" or "Holy Spirit." Ps. 51, 11. We know why He is called "Spirit"; for being true God, He is a spirit. But we ask, Why is He called the *Holy Spirit*, or the *Holy Ghost*?

a. We have already seen that He is true God. God is holy. Qu. 104. Hence the Spirit is holy. For this reason the seraphim before God's throne do not ascribe holiness to the Father and to the Son only, but to all three Persons. Is. 6, 3. — The Third Person of the Trinity, then, is called *Holy Ghost* "*because He is Himself holy.*" Qu. 173, 1.

b. However, the Father and the Son also are holy. If, nevertheless, the word "holy" is used to distinguish the Third Person from the other two, it is evident that this word must, in this case, have added significance. What this significance is may be seen from 1 Cor. 6, 11. Qu. 174. St. Paul here speaks of the work which is wrought in Christians "by the Spirit of our God." We have been "washed" from our sins; "sanctified," that is, filled with holy thoughts and desires; and "justified," or declared righteous and free from guilt before God. These benefits have been given us "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ"; we have received them because He has won them for us. We have received "*Christ and His salvation.*" Qu. 173, 2. Christ and His salvation have been made our own, our property; they have been "*appropriated to us.*" Qu. 173, 2. And this has been wrought "by the Spirit

of our God," by the Holy Ghost. The work of the Holy Ghost, therefore, consists in "*appropriating to us Christ and His salvation.*" Qu. 173, 2.

"Christ and His salvation," however, become our property, are appropriated to us, only if we believe, if we have faith. And in order to make them our own, the Spirit of God works faith within us. His work consists in "*working faith in us.*" Qu. 173, 2.—And having faith, and therefore possessing Christ and His salvation, we are once more in conformity with the will of God—we are holy. Thus this is the work of the Holy Ghost that "*He makes us holy.*" Qu. 173, 2. For this reason is He called the *Holy Ghost*, "*because He makes us holy by working faith in us and appropriating to us Christ and His salvation.*" Qu. 173, 2.

For these two reasons, therefore, the Third Person of the Trinity is called the *Holy Ghost*, namely: "*1. Because He is Himself holy; 2. because He makes us holy by working faith in us and appropriating to us Christ and His salvation.*" Qu. 173. (*Large Catechism*, 455, 36.)

## II. THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS WORK IN US. QU. 174. 176.

We have heard that the Third Person of the Godhead is called the *Holy Ghost* "because He makes us holy." Qu. 173. Another expression for "to make holy" is "to sanctify." Therefore the work of making us holy is called the work of sanctification. And, as we have also seen, it consists in this, that the Spirit "makes us holy by working faith in us and appropriating to us Christ and His salvation." Qu. 173. The explanation of the Third Article describes it as causing us to "believe in Jesus Christ," or "to come to Him."—This work, our sanctification, we ascribe entirely to the Holy Ghost. Thereby we confess, on the one hand, that we cannot perform this work ourselves, and, on the other hand, that the Holy Ghost can and does perform it.

A. Sanctification is not our own work. In the explanation of the Third Article we confess: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him." Qu. 174.

a. 1. "I cannot by my own reason . . . believe in Jesus Christ." Qu. 174. Our reason, that is, our intellect, or understanding, is a gift of God, and was perfect when man came from the hand of his Creator. Man, at that time, knew and understood earthly facts perfectly. He knew and understood also all truths revealed by the Spirit of God, that is, all spiritual truths. If, then, man had remained as God created

him, he would be able by his own reason to know Christ as His Savior. In other words, he would be able, by his own reason, to believe in Jesus Christ.—But sin has corrupted man in every respect, and hence also his reason. As a result, man is no longer able with his natural intellect to know Jesus Christ. This is clearly stated in 1 Cor. 2, 14. “The natural man” is man in the condition in which he is by nature since the Fall, man corrupted entirely, and therefore also his reason. Man in his natural condition “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” The things of the Spirit of God are those things which man cannot know except by special revelation of God, but which the Spirit has revealed to Him by the inspired Word. Hence they are not the Law. For man has some knowledge of the Law even without the Bible. Rom. 2, 14, 15. But the Gospel is the “mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations,” Col. 1, 26, and which is revealed by the Word *only*. The “things of the Spirit of God” are the things contained in the Gospel-message. Of these things we read that “the natural man receiveth” them not. The natural man does not grasp them. He understands the words, but “they are foolishness unto him.” “Neither *can* he know them,” regard them as divine truth. “For they are spiritually discerned”; they are grasped only “spiritually,” that is, by the power of the Spirit, but nevermore by man’s natural reason. Man’s natural reason cannot see Christ as the Savior from sin. In spiritual things it is *blind*. Therefore I confess that “I cannot by my own *reason* . . . believe in Jesus Christ,” Qu. 174, “because . . . by nature *I am spiritually blind*.” Qu. 176.

2. “I cannot by my own . . . *strength* believe in Jesus Christ.” Qu. 174. In Eph. 2, 1, Christians are told that they were formerly, before they became Christians, “dead in trespasses and sins.” Theirs was not a bodily death, but the death of the soul as it manifests itself in trespasses and sins. Spiritual death was their condition by nature. However, to believe in Christ is spiritual life. Now, a dead man cannot by his own strength enter into life. So the natural man, dead in trespasses and sins, cannot by his own strength believe in Jesus Christ. Therefore I confess that “I cannot by my own . . . *strength* believe in Jesus Christ,” Qu. 174, “because . . . by nature *I am spiritually . . . dead*.” Qu. 176.

3. “I cannot by my own reason or strength *believe* in Jesus Christ,” Qu. 174, but can only despise and hate Him. For I am flesh born of flesh. John 3, 6. And the mind which is within me by nature is the mind of the flesh. Another expression for “mind of the flesh” is “carnal mind.” Of this

carnal mind the Bible says that it is “enmity against God.” Rom. 8, 7. It hates God. It may love false gods, idols, such gods as man imagines — gods filled with vice or winking at sin. But it can only hate and shun the holy, righteous God to whom none can approach except through Jesus Christ. It is unwilling by faith to place its confidence in Him. Therefore “I cannot by my own reason or strength *believe in Jesus Christ*,” Qu. 174, “*because . . . by nature I am . . . an enemy of God*.” Qu. 176.

Such being man’s natural condition, the Bible says: “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.” 1 Cor. 12, 3. To say that Jesus is the Lord, our Lord, who has bought us with His blood, is to believe in Him. Merely to repeat these words mechanically is indeed in the power of natural man; even a parrot can do that. But to say them with his heart, as the expression of his inmost confidence, this is beyond man’s own reason or strength.

Therefore I properly confess that “*I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ*,” Qu. 174, “*because . . . by nature I am spiritually blind and dead, and an enemy of God*.” Qu. 176.

b. We also take note of the fact that the explanation of the Third Article confesses: “*I believe that I cannot*,” etc. The fact of man’s utter spiritual corruption and of his total inability to believe in Jesus Christ by his own reason or strength is a very bitter truth for natural man and exceedingly humiliating to his natural pride. Therefore flesh and blood are ever inclined to deny it. But even common human experience proves it to be a fact indeed. But we do not here speak of it as being established by the experience of six thousand years of history; we here say: “*I believe*,” I accept and confess this fact with Christian faith. Christian faith, however, does not have its foundation in human experience or human research, or in deductions which the mind of man has made. Christian faith rests upon the only foundation which is absolutely reliable, upon the clear statements of the Word of God. Irrespective of the experiences of men, and notwithstanding all arguments to the contrary which human pride may advance, I still know with absolute assurance, and confess with unshaken and unerring confidence that “*I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him*.” And the foundation of this assurance is the Word. I believe and confess it “*because I believe the Scriptures*.” Qu. 176.

Therefore I properly confess: “*I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord*,

*or come to Him,” Qu. 174, “because I believe the Scriptures, which say that by nature I am spiritually blind and dead, and an enemy of God.” Qu. 176.*

B. Having stated that “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord,” St. Paul adds, “but by the Holy Ghost.” 1 Cor. 12, 3. Notwithstanding the utter corruption in which man is born, and which was also mine by nature, I now can and do believe in Jesus Christ. This change has not been wrought by the power of man. It is the work — and it can be the work — of only One. And that One is the Holy Ghost. — Therefore, after Christ has won everlasting salvation for us, the utter hopelessness in which our natural corruption would still have left us is relieved by the grace and power of the Holy Ghost, who works in us acceptance of all that Christ has won for us. This we gratefully acknowledge in the Third Article. Having confessed my own inability to believe in Jesus Christ by my own reason or strength, I proceed: “*But the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.*” Qu. 175.

CONCLUSION.—With full confidence of heart and with profoundest joy and gratitude do I say: “I believe in the Holy Ghost.” As the Father has created me unto eternal life, and as the Son has redeemed me unto God with His blood, the Holy Ghost, according to His almighty power and grace, leads me into, and preserves me in, the enjoyment of all that the Father’s and the Son’s love has prepared for me. As my faith leans upon the Father as my Creator and Preserver and upon the Son as my Redeemer, it leans upon the Holy Ghost as my Sanctifier and Comforter.

### B. The Various Operations of the Holy Ghost in our Hearts.

Qu. 177—181.

(PREFATORY REMARKS. — Dr. Loy’s English version of Luther’s Small Catechism — which, because of its excellence, has been officially adopted by the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, and is, therefore, the text contained in all our official publications — has this rendition: “The Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.” All other English versions of the Catechism which have come to our notice do not differ essentially from this translation.

There is no doubt whatever that what these words do express is sound Bible doctrine. But there is a question in our mind as to whether, in this arrangement, they express *all* that Luther intended to express in the original German. We believe fuller justice would have been done the original if the words had been arranged thus: “The Holy Ghost has, by the Gospel, called me,

enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." The difference in *form* is, of course, the position of the words "by the Gospel"; the difference in *meaning* consists in this, that, while the usual mode of translating associates "by the Gospel" with the *call only*, our suggestion would make these words apply to *all* the operations of the Holy Ghost. While both renditions leave the pure doctrine inviolate, and while the trained teacher will likely not fail to point out to his pupils the fact that the Holy Ghost operates in our hearts through the Gospel only, there remains the historical question as to the meaning which Luther intended to convey in this place.

As to Luther's original German text, it is evident that, viewed from a purely grammatical angle only, it would admit of either interpretation; nor could he have made the meaning clearer in the German text without a heavier construction—a very undesirable feature in a text-book for children. But we consider the following facts as very material evidence in favor of the interpretation which would find expression in the arrangement of the words as suggested by us:—

1. The Gospel actually is the means whereby the entire work of the Holy Ghost is performed in us. In the Small Catechism, Luther evidently intended to compress the greatest possible amount of doctrine in the smallest possible number of words. It is only reasonable, therefore, to assume that Luther wanted the words of the original German interpreted in the widest sense which their construction would permit—that sense which is expressed in the suggested translation.

2. Luther is ever very emphatic in asserting that "God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments, and that whatever without the Word and Sacraments is extolled as Spirit is the devil himself." Smalcald Articles, 322, 10. Why, then, should we assume that in the Small Catechism he should have used a construction which may be understood as expressing the same truth in full, but that he wanted this truth expressed only in part?

3. The official Latin text in the Book of Concord has this rendition: *Spiritus Sanctus per evangelium me vocavit, suis donis illuminavit*, etc., thus making *per evangelium* the modifier as fully as *me* is the object of all four verbs. True, this is not Luther's own translation. It was prepared by Sauermann, and published by Schirlentz at Wittenberg in 1529. But it had received Luther's express approval. The suggested version, therefore, expresses the interpretation which Luther himself has sanctioned.

We shall, therefore, treat these words as though they read: "The Holy Ghost has, by the Gospel, called me, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.")

**INTRODUCTION.**—We have seen that the work which is ascribed to the Holy Ghost especially is the work of sanctification, whereby we are made partakers of the benefits of

Christ. We have, furthermore, seen that without the work of the Holy Ghost we could nevermore be sanctified. Since, then, through the work of sanctification we are made partakers of the gifts which Christ has won for us, we shall consider this work at greater length, discussing in detail

### THE VARIOUS OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY GHOST IN OUR HEARTS.

*I. The Holy Ghost has, by the Gospel, Called Me.* Qu. 177.

a. The Holy Ghost has *called* me. What is meant by the call is illustrated in the story of the Great Supper, Luke 14, 16—24. A certain man, having made a great supper, sent forth his servant to say to the guests: “Come; for all things are now ready.” When those who had first been called refused to come, the master sent his servant into the streets and lanes of the city, saying, “Bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” And when there was yet room, the master said: “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in.” He was to *bring in* guests by saying, “Come; for all things are now ready.” He was to *compel* them, not by physical force, but by the urgency and cordiality of the invitation.—This man who made the great supper is a type of God. He, too, has prepared a supper. He has prepared it for all men. It consists in all the benefits which Christ has won for us—forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, eternal salvation. All this has been prepared; it is now ready. Nothing more remains to be done, except that they for whom it has been prepared should be brought in and partake of the blessings of Christ.—And now the Holy Ghost *calls* men. He informs them that “all things are now ready,” that salvation has been fully prepared for them in Christ Jesus. He bids them, “Come.” He would “compel them” to come; not by physical force, but by inviting them, urging them, pleading with them, “Come; for all things are now ready”; salvation is won; your redemption is an accomplished fact. Accept it without payment or reward. Come; “for why will ye die?” Ezek. 33, 11.

The call of the Holy Ghost, therefore, consists in this, that *He informs us of our salvation in Christ, and invites us to accept it.* This we confess in the words: “The Holy Ghost has *called* me.” Qu. 177.

b. He has called me “*by the Gospel.*” We have already heard that the Gospel is “the glad tidings of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.” Qu. 100. The Gospel tells us that we are reconciled to God through the suffering and death of

Jesus Christ, and that in Him heaven and salvation are given us. And this assurance is not conveyed through the Gospel in its spoken (or written) form only, but also in its "visible" form. By the visible form of the Gospel we mean the Sacraments. For while the Gospel itself cannot be seen, it is, in Baptism and in the Lord's Supper, connected with things which we can see, with water or with bread and wine. And we call these Sacraments the visible *Word*, or *Gospel*, because the chief thing in either Sacrament is not the earthly element, but the Gospel, which is connected with these visible signs. And both the spoken Word and the Sacraments give us this assurance: "All things are now ready." Luke 14, 17. — But the Gospel in either form not only *tells* us that salvation is prepared for us, but it constitutes also an *invitation* to come and enjoy the great supper which God has prepared for us. This is the case whenever such invitation is expressed directly (as, for instance, in Matt. 11, 28); but it is the case also when no direct mention is made of such invitation. (Example: A mother calling, "Supper is ready," gives not only information, but also invitation.) — Thus the Holy Ghost calls us *through the Word and the Sacraments*, or, as the Third Article expresses it, *through the Gospel*. — We take note of the fact that the Creed mentions no other way in which the Holy Ghost calls men. Some have said that the Holy Ghost does not need any means to call us, but that He can call us also without the Gospel. It is idle, however, to argue what the Holy Ghost can do or what He cannot do. The fact is that He has promised to call men through the Gospel only. Whoever would himself be saved or save others must use the Gospel, the Word and the Sacraments. And whoever despises these despises the means of the Holy Ghost for his salvation. (See also Luke 16, 27—31.) — We confess, in accordance with the Scriptures, that "the Holy Ghost has called me by the *Gospel*." Qu. 177.

c. "*The Holy Ghost* has called me by the *Gospel*." The Holy Ghost is God. His call is the call of God. If even the invitation of man has weight and force, this is true in a higher sense with regard to the invitation of God.

When the master had prepared a great supper and, through his servant, had said, "Come, for all things are now ready," his invitation gave to all to whom these words were spoken right and title to all that had been prepared. The Holy Ghost calls us to the greater supper which God has prepared for all mankind in Christ. And His invitation gives us right and title to all that Christ has won for us. It makes these benefits our own. It gives them into our

possession for time and for eternity. As truly as God cannot lie, forgiveness of sins and all the glory of Christ's heavenly kingdom have by the Gospel been made my own possession, so that I may come before the very throne of God and claim them with the plea, "Thy Spirit hath bid me 'Come.'" Thus the Word and the Sacraments actually *give and convey* the benefits of Christ because they are the words of the Holy Ghost.—Not only this. The Holy Ghost being God, His word is the word of God. And the word of God is an almighty word. The word of God has power not only to *express* His will, but also to *perform* it. When God said, "Let there be light," there was light. Gen. 1, 3. When Jesus called, "Lazarus, come forth," "he that was dead came forth." John 11, 43. 44. And so likewise, when the Holy Ghost calls by the Gospel, His almighty power operates through such call toward the accomplishment of His will. Through the Gospel He not only offers the grace of God, but also *works acceptance of such grace*.—For this reason the Word and the Sacraments, that is, the Gospel in its twofold form, are called "*means of grace*," because through them the Holy Ghost offers and conveys to us the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and works acceptance of the same.—This gracious power of the Holy Ghost we acknowledge when we confess: "*The Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel.*"

We have thus seen that the call of the Holy Ghost consists in this, that *through the Gospel He offers and conveys to us the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and works acceptance of the same*. All of which we confess in the words: "*The Holy Ghost has, by the Gospel, called me.*" Qu. 177.

## *II. The Holy Ghost has, by the Gospel, Enlightened Me with His Gifts. Qu. 178.*

We have considered the words, "*The Holy Ghost has, by the Gospel, called me.*" We will now speak of the *effect* which this call has produced in us.

a. The Holy Ghost has *enlightened* me. To enlighten means to supply with light. Of this enlightenment St. Peter says, 1 Pet. 2, 9, He "hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." We were in darkness. When darkness prevails about us, we cannot see. St. Peter, therefore, says we could not see. But the darkness which surrounded us was not physical darkness; for we could see earthly visible objects. It was rather spiritual darkness. We could not see the "things of the Spirit of God." We could not understand what the Spirit tells us in the Gospel. We could indeed hear the words and understand their literal meaning. But we

could not see that they were truth. They were foolishness unto us. This spiritual darkness, therefore, is the same condition which has also been called spiritual blindness. Qu. 176. (Example: St. Paul, before his conversion, knew of Christ; yet he sincerely believed he was serving God by persecuting His adherents. Acts 22, 3—6.) In this spiritual darkness we were born, and we had as little power to attain to the light as one who is born with physical blindness can, by his own power, win his eyesight. — But God the Holy Ghost has called us out of this darkness “into His marvelous light.” This light, too, is not physical light; it is spiritual light, the opposite of spiritual darkness. Hence, as the darkness consisted in the *inability*, so the light consists in the *ability* to see “the things of the Spirit of God.” And since this is not an outward light for our physical eyes, but an inward light for the heart, St. Paul says: “God . . . hath shined *in our hearts.*” We now see with our hearts the “things of the Spirit of God.” To *see* spiritual things, however, is with our hearts to know them to be true. This light wherewith the Holy Ghost has enlightened me, therefore, consists in the *knowledge of spiritual things* which He has given me.

The work of the Holy Ghost which is here called “enlightenment” is described by the Bible also as “regeneration,” Titus 3, 5, and “conversion,” Acts 15, 3. The meaning of the word “regenerate” is “to beget anew,” or “to give a new birth.” Hence Jesus says: “Except a man be born again,” etc., John 3, 3, that is, “regenerated.” The word “regeneration” is used for “enlightenment” to denote the greatness of the change which is wrought in man through this act of the Holy Ghost. For thereby man, who was born in spiritual blindness, has received spiritual sight, so that he now knows as truth and wisdom what was formerly foolishness unto him, and he now rejoices in, and loves, what formerly he despised and hated—a change as complete as though he had once more been born, become a different man.—The word “conversion” means “turning.” Hence Jeremiah prays, “Turn Thou me,” Jer. 31, 18, that is, Convert Thou me. The word “conversion” is used for “enlightenment” in order to denote the change of attitude which has been wrought by the Holy Ghost in man. While formerly man was turned away from God, and turned toward sin and spiritual darkness, he is now turned away from sin and darkness, and turned to God.

We have seen, then, that enlightenment, or regeneration, or conversion, is that act of the Holy Ghost according to which He has given us to “*know* the things of the Spirit of God.” Qu. 178.

b. The Holy Ghost has enlightened me "*with His gifts.*" These words explain more fully what has been stated in the words "enlightened me." For the giving of light into my heart consists in the bestowing of gifts. What gifts these are is seen from 2 Cor. 4, 6: "God . . . hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God." The shining in our hearts is the giving of light. This light is knowledge; He has given us to know something which without Him we could not know. He has given us the "knowledge of the glory of God"; He has taught us to know the glory of God—not His glory as it manifests itself in His judgments according to the Law, but His glory "in the face of Jesus Christ." Christ is "the image of His Person," Heb. 1, 3, the image of God. In the face of Christ we see the face of God. And God as He is seen in Christ and through Christ is the God of grace, God propitiated through Christ, no longer frowning upon us in His just wrath, but full of grace, as our true Father receiving us into His bosom. Hence the "knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" is the knowledge of the glorious grace of God as it is manifested in Christ, our Savior, or the knowledge of Christ as our Savior. This, then, is the gift of the Holy Ghost wherewith He has enlightened me, that He has made me to "*know Christ as my Savior.*" Qu. 178.—If, however, I know Jesus as my Savior, I no longer fear the curse of my sin or the wrath of God, but feel assured that these shall not harm me, because Jesus shields me from them. Thus I *trust* in Jesus. Such trust and confidence, however, is faith; I *believe* in Jesus.—This is the gift wherewith the Holy Ghost has enlightened me, that I now "*trust and believe . . . in Him.*" Qu. 178.—Not only this. Through Christ we know "*the glory of God.*" His glory is the exercise of His divine power and majesty, in this case the full exercise of the power of His grace, and the result of such exercise, all that His grace has made us. What this is may be seen from 1 Pet. 2, 9. His grace has made us a "chosen generation," chosen from the world to be God's own. His grace made us "a royal priesthood"; we are priests, privileged at all times to come into the presence of God and to receive grace for grace. We are royal priests, that is, priests who at the same time are kings. As kings, we, by the power of God, ever rule with Him over all enemies, and hence are secure from all dangers. His grace has made us a "holy nation," a nation of men who are in conformity with the will of God, and in whom the Most High has His delight. We are "a peculiar people," a people peculiar to God, that is, belonging to Him

entirely, and to Him only. These privileges are ours in Christ. And as we remember them, our hearts *rejoice in Him*. Neither do we glory in them only in days of peace and quiet; but in the days of severest strife and of greatest suffering and sorrow our spirits are upheld by the knowledge that through the grace of God in Christ we are secure in the favor and protection of our heavenly Father; and thus we *take comfort in Him*. This also is the gift of the Holy Ghost that, knowing Jesus, I "*rejoice and take comfort in Him*." Qu. 178.

These, then, are the gifts wherewith the Holy Ghost has enlightened me, "*that I know Jesus as my Savior, trust and believe, rejoice and take comfort in Him*." Qu. 178.

c. The Holy Ghost has *by the Gospel* enlightened me.—We have heard what the Gospel is, and what it includes, namely, the spoken (or written) Word and the Sacraments. That this Gospel is the means by which the Holy Ghost enlightens, converts, regenerates, is seen from 2 Cor. 4, 6. Giving His light into our hearts is here compared to the creation of light out of darkness in the beginning. But the making of physical light was performed in this way, that He "*commanded the light to shine out of darkness*." He made the light by His word. Gen. 1, 3. Likewise has He "*shined in our hearts*" by His Word, that is, by His Gospel.—The same truth is taught in 2 Tim. 1, 9. There the statement, "*Who hath saved us*," is repeated and explained in the words, "*And called us with an holy calling*," a calling which makes us holy by enlightening us, or working faith in us. That call was a call by the Gospel. By this call we have been saved, brought to faith, enlightened. Hence, as we were called by the Gospel, so are we also enlightened "*by the Gospel*."—"He has *by the Gospel* enlightened me." Qu. 178.

d. *The Holy Ghost* has enlightened me.—He alone has the power to perform this work. For conversion is a work which requires almighty power. As such it is described in 2 Cor. 4, 6. It was by the exercise of His almighty power that God "*commanded the light to shine out of darkness*" in the beginning. The same power was manifested when He "*shined in our hearts*." And since God alone has such power, God alone can convert, or enlighten. (Example: Paul, who was on his way to deliver Christians into the hands of their enemies, is by the power of the Word changed into a servant of Christ. Acts 22, 7—10.)—This is acknowledged also in Jer. 31, 18. Ephraim, though already converted, yet, feeling the weakness and rebellion of his own flesh, prays that God would continually repeat and strengthen this work. He says:

“Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned,” that is, I shall be converted; but I cannot convert myself; if this work is to be done, Thou must do it. Why? “For Thou art the Lord, my God.” Conversion is a work which requires divine power; Thou art my God and hast this power; therefore, acknowledging my own inability, I place all my hope in Thee. So do I also give all glory unto God by confessing: “*The Holy Ghost has . . . enlightened me.*”

And as the power to convert me was found in Him alone, the motive for exercising this power could likewise be found in Him alone. There was nothing in me which could or did prompt Him. “God saved us . . . not according to our works,” 2 Tim. 2, 9, uninfluenced by anything that we had done or left undone; for in all our doing or leaving undone we were only evil. He saved us “according to His own purpose.” It was His *purpose*; He *willed* to save us. It was His *own* purpose, the purpose which sprang from His own heart, without anything in me to prompt it. And He purposed to save us “according to His own . . . grace,” His own love toward us in Christ. Therefore, also, in Eph. 2, 8, 9, St. Paul, in speaking of our conversion (the context clearly shows that “saved through faith” is here equivalent to “converted.” See also Stoeckhardt, *Epheserbrief*, p. 125), ascribes it entirely to the grace of God, and expressly excludes everything in us from being a motive to prompt God to this work: “By grace . . . not of yourselves . . . it is the gift . . . not of works.”—Hence with regard to the motive as well as with regard to the power and the act itself, I give all glory to God alone, confessing: “*The Holy Ghost has by the Gospel enlightened me.*” Qu. 178.

Thus we have learned that “*He has by the Gospel enlightened me with His gifts, so that I know Jesus as my Savior, trust and believe, rejoice and take comfort in Him.*” Qu. 178.

### *III. The Holy Ghost has, by the Gospel, Sanctified Me in the True Faith. Qu. 179, 180.*

The work of sanctification, of which the Third Article treats, includes all that the Holy Ghost works in the heart of man. The word “sanctification” is thus seen to have a wide sense, embracing all the operations of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of men.—We have discussed two of these operations, namely, the call and enlightenment. The next operation of the Holy Ghost which is mentioned in the Third Article is described in the words, “Sanctified me in the true faith.” Thus here again we speak of sanctification.

But here it does not include all that was included in the word as we used it heretofore. Its sense has been narrowed down so as to include only *one* operation of the Holy Ghost. We say we are not now speaking of "*sanctification in the wider sense*," but of "*sanctification in the narrower sense*." Qu. 179.

a. 1. The Holy Ghost has sanctified me in the true faith. — In Eph. 2, 10 St. Paul says: "We are His workmanship." We know that God has created all men according to their natural bodies and souls. This applies not only to the Christians. The ungodly also are His workmanship, His handiwork. But in this place St. Paul makes a distinction between Christians and unbelievers. We who "were dead in sins," but whom "He hath quickened . . . together with Christ," v. 6, "we are His workmanship" in a sense which does not apply to the rest of mankind. And in what sense these words are to be taken is seen not only from the preceding words, but also from the words, "created in Christ Jesus." We are in Christ Jesus by faith; we were "created in Christ Jesus" when *faith* was wrought in us. — That faith through which we were made, in this special sense, the workmanship of God is, of course, not the faith of the head or of the mouth (such as the devils also have, Qu. 107), but the faith of the heart, which is wrought by the Holy Ghost. It is that faith which alone is "*true faith*." — Through this faith we have become "the workmanship of God." We have been made something which we were not by our natural birth. And this new man is not a bodily man, but the spiritual man. It was not a new body which was given to us, but a new spirit, a *new heart*, a heart entirely different from the natural, unbelieving heart. — We say: The Holy Ghost has "sanctified me in the true faith," that is, "*He has by faith renewed my heart*." Qu. 179.

2. The Holy Ghost has "*sanctified* me in the true faith." — St. Paul says we are "*created . . . unto good works*." Through this new creation we have become such as are fitted to walk in good works. The new heart *wants* to do what is pleasing to God. It "loves that which is good, and hates that which is evil." We say it is "*holy*." Qu. 107. Thus by working faith in us, the Holy Ghost has given us *holy* hearts, or made our hearts *holy*. To "*make holy*" is to "*sanctify*." Therefore we say: "*The Holy Ghost has sanctified me in the true faith*." — But in sanctifying me He has not only given me power to *will* what is good, but also power to *perform* it. God has "*before ordained*" good works; He has prepared them for us as a garment is made ready for a child. These good works are in Christ. And now He has "*created us in*

Christ Jesus," so that, being in Christ, we put on, walk in, those works which are in Christ. This was His object when He created us anew in Christ, that we should walk in them, that we should live Christ, that is, "Christ shall be magnified" in our mortal bodies. Phil. 1, 20. Thus Christians live no longer the life of their sinful flesh, but the life which is in Christ. The spirit in which they walk is a spirit of love and reverence for, and devotion to, the God who has created them in Christ. This spirit is called "godliness." They walk in "*godliness*." And the works which they perform in this spirit are called "*good works*." — Thus, in working faith in me, the Holy Ghost has also *sanctified* me, that is, He has given "*me power . . . to walk in godliness and good works*."

Qu. 179.

However, we notice that St. Paul says to the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. 4, 3: "This is the will of God, even *your sanctification*." The Apostle is not speaking to all people at Thessalonica, but to the Christians only. These, having been made believers, are also to be sanctified (in the narrower sense). And indeed, they *had* been sanctified, and were even now walking "in godliness and good works." But though, in conversion, a new man is born in us, the old sinful nature still abides with us. This old sinful nature is also called "the flesh." And the flesh does not want us to walk in godliness and good works, but would draw us back into ungodliness and evil works. And Satan would strengthen, and work through, the flesh and its lusts. Moreover, Satan uses also the world, that is, ungodly men, that through them he might, on the one hand, coax and entice our flesh, and, on the other hand, ridicule, threaten, and persecute us in his efforts to draw us back into ungodliness and sin. And because of these efforts of Satan, the world, and the flesh, our walk in Christ is ever weak and often halting. And we must ever fight against these enemies of our souls, or else they will subdue and destroy the new man in us, and bind us in two-fold chains of ungodliness and sin. And through ever new battles and through ever new victories we must grow in holiness of life. Our sanctification must daily be renewed and strengthened. This is what St. Paul means when he tells Christians that God would have them sanctified, made holy. He would, thereby, encourage us "*to struggle against . . . Satan, the world, and the flesh*." Qu. 179. Instead of walking again in ungodliness and sin when we are tempted, we should ever more firmly walk in godliness and good works, doing the very opposite of that whereto the enemies of the soul would lead us. We should thus "*overcome Satan, the world, and the flesh*." Qu. 179.

Thus in the words, "The Holy Ghost has *sanctified me*," I confess that "*He has by faith renewed my heart, and gives me power to struggle against and overcome Satan, the world, and the flesh, and to walk in godliness and good works.*" Qu. 179.

3. *The Holy Ghost* has sanctified me.—That sanctification is in no wise the work of man, but the work of the Holy Ghost alone, is seen from Eph. 2, 10. According to the new man, that is, the sanctified man, "we are His [God's] workmanship." Not we, but He alone has made us according to the new man. And this new man is "*created in Christ Jesus*," made out of nothing, Qu. 110, no part of the old man being sufficiently good to be made into a new man. As little as it was possible for the natural man to perform, either entirely or in part, the work of his physical creation, so little could the new man cause, or assist in, his own creation. The sanctified man in us has come into existence by the power of the Holy Ghost alone. And as the beginning of sanctification has been made in us by the Holy Ghost alone, so can we grow in sanctification only as the Holy Ghost gives strength and growth to the new man within us. Our sanctification, therefore, is the work of the Holy Ghost. Therefore we properly confess: "*The Holy Ghost* has . . . sanctified . . . me." Qu. 179.

4. The Holy Ghost has sanctified me *by the Gospel*.—That the Gospel is the means whereby we are sanctified is likewise evident from Eph. 2, 10. We are sanctified according to the new man. But according to this new man we are "*created in Christ Jesus*." It is through His Word that God creates. Qu. 110. And the Word whereby the new man has been created in us is, as we have seen, the Gospel. Now, as sanctification has been begun by the Gospel, it can continue also by the Gospel alone. Therefore also Christ, in His Sacerdotal Prayer, pleading for His disciples, says: "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth." John 17, 17. Hence, if we would grow in godliness and good works, we must use the Gospel, that is, the spoken Word and the Sacraments. And he who neglects these hinders and destroys the Spirit's work of sanctification in his heart.

We have thus seen that the Holy Ghost "*has sanctified me in the true faith; that is, He has by faith renewed my heart, and gives me power to struggle against and overcome Satan, the world, and the flesh, and to walk in godliness and good works.*" Qu. 179. And all of this I confess in the explanation of the Third Article in the words: "*The Holy Ghost has by the Gospel . . . sanctified . . . me in the true faith.*"

b. We have heard that, in sanctifying us in the true faith, the Holy Ghost gives us “power . . . to walk in . . . good works.” Men often speak of works as being good, when they mean that these works are good according to *the standard of man*. But the Holy Ghost prompts us to works which are good *in the sight of God*. And since the standard according to which God judges our works is different from, and high above, the standard of man, it is necessary that we should here discuss the question, “What is a good work in the sight of God?”

1. Only such works can be good works as are *performed by Christians*.—We have seen that Christians are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Eph. 2, 10. Qu. 179. A new creation was necessary in order to make them capable of performing good works. Since only Christians are new-created, “created in Christ Jesus,” only Christians are capable of performing good works.—The same truth is taught in John 15, 5. The good works are here called “fruit,” and the men who do good works are the branches which bear the fruit. The branch receives the strength to bear fruit from the vine. So man receives the power to do good works from Christ. In order to have strength to bear fruit, the branch must remain united with the vine. Likewise, man must remain in Christ if he would perform good works. A branch which is separated from the vine can no more bear fruit. And a man separated from Christ can do no good works. “Without Me ye can do nothing.” We abide in Christ while we have faith in Him. Christians alone, through faith, abide in Christ. Hence Christians alone can do good works. All non-Christians are without Christ, and hence “can do nothing,” can do no good works.—True, also non-Christians can do works which are good according to man-made standards and have earthly value. They can practise human virtues which are of earthly worth, such as purely human charity, purely human kindness, honesty, etc. But these are not good works *“in the sight of God”*, and the Bible never calls them good works. “The term ‘good works’ is never used, in the New Testament, for ritual obedience, or moral virtue as practised by unbelievers, or any other works than ‘the fruits of the Spirit.’ If any one doubts this, let him consult a good concordance. The only text which seems an exception is Rom. 13, 3, and that means ‘works good before God,’ primarily, though perhaps not exclusively.” (*Scott’s Bible*, under Eph. 2, 10.) — In Mark 14, 3—9 we are told of a woman who anointed Jesus with very precious ointment. Jesus expressly calls this act a “good work.” And we find that this woman was Mary,

John 12, 3, who had loved to sit at Jesus' feet to hear His words, Luke 10, 38—42, and who is thus seen to have been a Christian. — Thus we see that a good work can be only what "*a child of God does.*" Qu. 180.

2. A good work may consist in *deed, in word, or in thought.* — When Mary anointed Jesus, Mark 14, 3—9, she performed an outward act, which could be seen by men, as did also the widow when she offered her mite, Mark 12, 41—44. And these outward acts were good works. A good work, therefore, may be what "*a child of God does.*" Qu. 180. — The thief upon the cross, having come to faith, rebuked the blasphemy of the other malefactor and confessed Christ. Luke 23, 39—41. This also was a good work. Hence good works may be what "*a child of God . . . speaks.*" Qu. 180. — And when Abraham received command to offer up Isaac, though he could not understand how God's promise, "That in Isaac shall thy seed be called," and the command to sacrifice Isaac agreed, he firmly believed that the promise would be fulfilled, "accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead." Heb. 11, 17—19. This "*accounting*" was "*thinking.*" And that, too, was a good work. Hence a good work may be what "*a child of God . . . thinks.*" Qu. 180. — Thus we see that good works may consist in what "*a child of God does, speaks, or thinks.*" Qu. 180.

3. A good work is "*whatever a child of God does, speaks, or thinks in faith.*" — A Christian has not only the "*new man,*" which is "*created in Christ Jesus,*" but he still has also the old sinful flesh, of which he must confess with St. Paul: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Rom. 7, 18. Whatever is prompted by the flesh is sin. Thus when Sarah laughed at God's promise of a son in her old age, that was sin, which God rebuked. Gen. 18, 10—14. Though Sarah was a child of God, this act of hers was not a good work. It was sin because it was not done in faith, but in unbelief. But when Abraham thought that God would even raise up Isaac from the dead if that became necessary in order that His promise might be fulfilled, that was a good work. For that was not done in unbelief, but in faith. A good work, therefore, is "*whatever a child of God does, speaks, or thinks in faith.*" Qu. 180.

4. Moreover, faith is always guided by the Word of God. It recognizes God as our God and Lord, whose will is our only rule and guide also in the performance of our works of service to Him. — There were such in the days of Christ as followed self-chosen works of righteousness. These men were called Pharisees, and they taught that man could please

God by performing works which God has not asked us to do. Of these our Savior says: "In vain they do worship Me," Matt. 15, 9, that is, their worship, whenever they would serve Me by self-chosen works, is worthless. Self-chosen works are not good works at all. In our days also there are such as would tell us that we may serve God in all manner of ways which the Word of God does not mention, as, by fastings, taking vows and pledges of various kinds, and the like. To them also apply the words of Christ: "In vain they do worship Me."—Christ also tells us why their works are worthless, namely, because they are "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Only such works are good works as are done according to the commandments of God, the *Ten Commandments*.—Hence such works are good works as are done "*according to the Ten Commandments*." Qu. 180.

5. However, the mere outward conformity of a work to the Ten Commandments is not sufficient to make it a good work; the motive also must be pure and good. Thus Ananias gave money to the poor. Many others had done the same thing, and God had been pleased. But Ananias gave because he wanted to win honor and applause among the Christians. For this reason he even lied that he was giving all that he had. Acts 5, 1—3. That was not a good work, not considering even his lie. It would have been a good work if, without seeking honor for himself, he had given what he did in order that God might be glorified by his act of love toward his brethren. For that the glory of God must be the motive of every good work is seen from 1 Cor. 10, 31, where Christians are commanded to do "whatssoever," that is, "all that," they do to the glory of God.—And that the desire to glorify God should manifest itself also in seeking to benefit our neighbor is seen from 1 Pet. 4, 10, where we are commanded to consider as a gift of God's grace (Greek: *charisma*, gift of grace) whatever opportunity and ability we have of ministering, that is, serving one another.—Hence a good work is one which is done "*for the glory of God and the benefit of our neighbor*." Qu. 180.

6. All works which are thus done by the children of God in faith, according to the Ten Commandments, for the glory of God and the benefit of their neighbors, are good works. This is the case also with regard to things which man does not esteem as being of great importance. The poor widow's mite pleased the Savior more than all the large sums given by the less devout rich. And in 1 Cor. 10, 31 we are commanded even to eat and to drink to the glory of God. We do this if, in eating and drinking, we acknowledge God as

the Giver, ask His blessings, and eat and drink in order that we may have strength to serve Him and our neighbor. In fact, we are not to do anything unless we do it to the glory of God; for whatever we cannot do to the glory of God is sin. "Whatsoever ye do, do it all to the glory of God." Thus in the works of their calling, no matter how humble they may be, in all their pleasures, and in all the sorrows and burdens which they bear, if in doing so they glorify God, Christians are performing good works, wherewith God is well pleased.—Good works in the sight of God, then, are *all* that, or "*whatever*, a child of God does, speaks, or thinks, in faith," etc. Qu. 180.

7. These works are "*good works*" in the sight of God. True, they are not perfect. And our very best efforts will not be able to produce one single perfect work. "When I would do good, evil is present with me." Rom. 7, 21. Why, then, does the Bible call them *good works*? Because we who do them are believers. Through faith we *always* have forgiveness of our sins. We have forgiveness also of that sin which still clings to our good works. The blood of Christ always washes this sin away at once. By faith we have the perfection of Christ. And this at once supplies whatever is imperfect in our works. Thus our works come before the face of God only as they are washed with the blood of Christ and made perfect with Christ's perfection. And hence we can rejoice in the knowledge that our weak and imperfect service is, by grace, made such that the eyes of God delight in beholding it, yea, that the Savior will glory in our works before all the hosts of heaven and earth and hell at the last day. Matt. 25, 31—40. Our good works are really and truly *good* in the sight of God.

We have seen, then, that "*whatever a child of God does, speaks, or thinks in faith, according to the Ten Commandments, for the glory of God and the benefit of his neighbor*" is "*a good work in the sight of God*." Qu. 180.

And that I have both the will and the power to perform such works has been wrought in me by the Holy Ghost. This I acknowledge and confess in the words: "*The Holy Ghost has by the Gospel . . . sanctified . . . me in the true faith*."

#### *IV. The Holy Ghost has, by the Gospel, Kept Me in the True Faith. Qu. 181.*

a. He has *kept me in the true faith*.—We have seen that the Holy Ghost has enlightened us, that is, He has wrought faith in our hearts. This is an important work. For without

faith we would be lost forever. But through faith we have become possessors of all that Christ has won for us. However, the mere fact that we have once been converted does not in itself assure unto us eternal life. For if we again fall away from faith, we also lose again all that we have received by faith. Only "he that shall endure unto the end . . . shall be saved." Matt. 24, 13. Therefore it is important that we should continue in the faith. — In the Creed we confess our faith; we say, "I believe." Thereby we acknowledge that we still have faith, that we are being "kept . . . through faith unto salvation," 1 Pet. 1, 5, or, as we say in the Third Article, "*kept in the true faith.*" Qu. 181.

b. *The Holy Ghost* has kept me in the true faith. — Man has been unable to work faith in his own heart. Neither is his own power sufficient to preserve him in the faith. For though a new man is born within him, his flesh is also ever present with him, and only too willing to yield to the temptations of the world and the devil. And if man ever trusts in his own power to stand firm in the faith, he must come to shame, as Peter came to shame when he believed that *he* was strong enough to resist the temptation to deny Christ. Hence if our own strength were the foundation of our hope of steadfastness in the faith, we would be without any real hope. — But now the Apostle says: "Ye are kept *by the power of God.*" 1 Pet. 1, 5. The Holy Ghost is God. He is able to keep us in the faith. And He is willing to keep us. Hence St. Paul felt assured that the Philippians would continue in the faith — not because *they* were strong enough to remain steadfast, but because he was "confident of this very thing, that *He* which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil. 1, 6. The "good work" whereof St. Paul speaks is faith. The Holy Ghost has begun this. And if it is to be continued until it comes to its final goal at the Last Day, the Holy Ghost must perform it. — Therefore we confess: "*The Holy Ghost* has . . . kept me in the true faith." Qu. 181.

c. He has *by the Gospel* kept me in the true faith. — In 1 Pet. 1, 5 the apostle says: "Ye are kept *by the power of God* through faith unto salvation." How does God the Holy Ghost exert this power? The Bible knows of but one means through which the Holy Ghost works in us *all* that is necessary for salvation. That is the Gospel, the Word and the Sacraments. The Gospel alone is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Rom. 1, 16. Qu. 100. As the Holy Ghost has by the power of the Gospel first

"shined in our hearts," that is, given us faith, so does He, by this same power of the Gospel, keep alive the flame of faith. When the flesh would forget God's grace, when sin would accuse us, when the world, by hatred or with a friendly face, would draw us away from Christ, when sorrow and distress afflict us, and hide the love of God from our mortal eyes, the Holy Ghost, as our Comforter, through the Gospel strengthens and supports our wavering faith. — Therefore, if His power is to continue in us, it is important that we should be diligent in the use of the Gospel, of the Word and the Sacraments. For if we neglect these, we are shutting off "the power of God unto salvation," and must inevitably lose our faith. For the power of God through which we are kept in the faith is *the Gospel*.

We praise the grace of the Holy Ghost also by confessing that "*He has by the Gospel kept me in the true faith.*" Qu. 181.

We have thus seen that the operations of the Holy Ghost in our hearts consist in this, that "*the Holy Ghost has by the Gospel called me, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.*"

**CONCLUSION.** — We have thus learned to know how inestimable a debt of gratitude we owe the Holy Ghost. He has wrought in us all that is necessary to make and preserve as our own the sonship of God which Christ has won for us. In us there is nothing but sin and spiritual death. All our life, our hope, our joy to all eternity, — we owe all to Him. (*Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book*, Hymn 308.) We worship His almighty power, place all our hope of eternal possession of the benefits of Christ's redemption in Him alone, and therefore joyfully, trustingly, adoringly say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost."

#### C. The Accomplishment of the Work of the Holy Ghost in the Hearts of Men. Qu. 182. 183.

**INTRODUCTION.** — We have seen who the Holy Ghost is, and what work is ascribed to Him especially. We have furthermore seen wherein His work consists, how necessary it is for our salvation, and what great benefits it bestows upon all in whom it is performed. It now remains for us to learn in what men this work is accomplished, and in whom it fails of success, and the reason for such success or failure. We now speak of *the accomplishment of the work of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of men.* — We speak

## I. OF THOSE IN WHOM IT IS ACCOMPLISHED.

a. In the Creed we speak of the work of the Holy Ghost as it relates especially to each one of us individually. We say, "*I believe,*" and, "The Holy Ghost has, by the Gospel, called *me*, enlightened *me*, sanctified and kept *me*." We properly do this; for it will not benefit *me* if all the rest of the world believes in Christ while *I* remain in unbelief, or if the Holy Ghost calls, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps in the faith all the rest of mankind while *I* remain in spiritual darkness, or return to it after having been converted. (See Qu. 108.) — But we do not entirely disregard the fact that in others also the work of the Holy Ghost is accomplished. For we say: "He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith." As we shall see in our next lesson, "the Christian Church on earth" is but another expression for "the whole number of all believers." Qu. 185. The work of the Holy Ghost is performed in all believers. And wherever upon earth there is any person who is really and truly a believer in Christ, there the work of the Holy Ghost is being accomplished. — Thus I confess that the work of the Holy Ghost is being accomplished *in me and in all other believers in Christ*, or in "*the whole Christian Church on earth.*" Qu. 182.

b. We ask, however, whence it is that in these the work of the Holy Ghost prospers while so many men remain in unbelief. And the Bible tells us clearly what the reason is. In Hos. 13, 9 God says to Israel through the prophet: "In Me is thine help." Whatever help and salvation there is, is to be found in God only. And hence the help and salvation which the Holy Ghost has wrought in me is His help, His salvation, His work entirely. No cause for it is to be found in me. I was as sinful as all other men. I was by nature an enemy of God, even as they who perish. I resisted the work of the Holy Ghost, and was by nature unwilling to give heed when He called. The changed condition in which I find myself has been wrought by Him alone. — This is clearly stated also in Jer. 31, 3. God there speaks to Israel, that is, to the true believers among the Jews. He reminds them of the fact that they have proof of His love in their own selves. They could not, and did not want to, come to Him. Yet they now are with Him. How has this come about? "*I have drawn thee,*" He says. Neither did He draw them because they were by nature better than such as remained in unbelief. "*I have loved thee; . . . therefore . . . have I drawn thee.*" Thus the work was His work alone; "*I have drawn*

thee." And the motive was His own alone; "I have loved thee." His love and power are the only reason why His work is accomplished in each and every believer. Therefore we confess that "*He*," that is, the Holy Ghost, and "*He*" alone, is the Author of the success which His work has achieved in those who are "*the whole Christian Church on earth.*"

All this I express in the words of the explanation of the Third Article: "*He* calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies *the whole Christian Church on earth*, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith." Qu. 182.

## II. OF THOSE IN WHOM IT IS NOT ACCOMPLISHED.

a. In the Creed I confess that the work of the Holy Ghost has been performed in "*the whole Christian Church.*" I do not mention the rest of mankind. And the reason why I properly fail to mention them is evident from Matt. 23, 37. "*Many are called.*" The Holy Ghost calls them through the Gospel. "*But few are chosen,*" chosen to be God's own in time and in eternity. Few are saved. The rest, though called, are not saved; they "*are . . . lost.*" Qu. 183.—And there are not a few of those who are lost. Those who are chosen are few; but those who are lost are many in number. More are lost than are saved. "*Most men . . . are lost.*" Qu. 183.

b. Why are these not saved? Why is the work of the Holy Ghost not accomplished in them also?

1. Not because God does not want them to be saved, and therefore does not call them with the intention that such call should work most effectually in their hearts.—God earnestly desires the salvation of these also. The Bible expressly tells us that God "*will have all men to be saved,*" 1 Tim. 2, 4, and that He "*is not willing that any should perish,*" 1 Pet. 3, 9. Yea, by a solemn oath—swearing by Himself since there is none greater than He, by whom He might swear—He assures us that He has "*no pleasure in the death of the wicked.*" Ezek. 33, 11.—God has, moreover, given evidence of this His desire for the salvation of all men not only by His words, but by His deeds as well. He sent forth His Son in the flesh for the world, that is, for *all* men, John 3, 16, for *all* who are lost, Matt. 18, 11. Christ has borne the sins of *all* men. John 1, 29; 1 John 2, 2. He has bought even those who deny Him and are lost. 2 Pet. 2, 1.—God also commanded the Gospel to be preached to *all* men. Mark 16, 15. Through the Gospel the Holy Ghost really and truly calls

not only the few who are chosen, but also the many who are lost. Matt. 22, 14. And as they are called, it is the will of God that "all should come to the knowledge of the truth," 1 Tim. 2, 4, that is, "be enlightened." Qu. 178. It is the will of God that "all should come to repentance," 1 Pet. 3, 9, that is, with sorrow because of their sins turn to, and believe in, Christ.—Therefore, when asked, "Is the Holy Ghost willing to work all this in *every* one who hears the Gospel?" we answer firmly and unreservedly, "Yes." Qu. 183.

2. But when the Holy Ghost would work all this in them, they will not.—In Matt. 23, 37 Jesus complains of Jerusalem. Though He had endeavored in every way to win the people to Himself, they were walking the way of destruction. It was no fault of His that it was thus. "Ye would not."—But had they not heard the Gospel, which the prophets and Christ Himself had preached to them? Did the Holy Ghost really want to convert them through this Word? He indeed wanted to do so. But though they heard the Gospel, through which the Holy Ghost wanted to convert them, they "*resisted*" Him. Acts 7, 51. Qu. 183. This, and this alone, is the cause of the loss of their souls.—And though the Holy Ghost continued, for a long time, to call them, and wanted to move them to repentance, they persisted in their resistance. They resisted "*obstinately*." Qu. 183. Thus men are lost notwithstanding the efforts of the Holy Ghost to save them, "*because they obstinately resist the Word and Spirit of God.*" Qu. 183. Hence their damnation is not due to the unwillingness of the Holy Ghost to perform His work in them also. To them apply the words: "Thou hast destroyed thyself." Hos. 13, 9. They are "*lost by their own fault.*" Qu. 183.

Therefore, when asked, "Is the Holy Ghost willing to work all this in every one who hears the Gospel?" we answer with the Scriptures, "*Yes; but most men obstinately resist the Word and Spirit of God, and are thus lost by their own fault.*" Qu. 183.

CONCLUSION.—We have thus seen that few are saved, and that these owe their salvation neither to their own efforts nor to any difference in natural corruption as compared with the children of perdition, but that they are saved by the power and grace of the Holy Ghost alone; while most men perish, not because of lack of grace on the part of the Holy Ghost, but solely because of their perversity and obstinate resistance. Human reason does not see how these two facts agree with each other. Nor can we ever learn to see it in this life. But this is the teaching of the Word of God,

which is not to be comprehended, but to be believed. And, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." John 20, 29. Let us be warned that there is no excuse before God for unbelief. Let us believe, rejoice in our salvation, and trusting for attainment of eternal life in the Spirit of God alone, let us express such trust and confidence in the words, "I believe in the Holy Ghost."

## II. THE HOLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH, THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

(PREFATORY REMARKS.—At this point our readers will, no doubt, expect a brief statement as to the propriety of using the form, "*I believe in* the Holy Christian Church," in preference to, "*I believe* the Holy Christian Church," — the more so, since the German official text of our synodical "Short Exposition of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism" has the form, "Ich glaube eine heilige christliche Kirche," while the English version uses the form, "*I believe in* the Holy Christian Church." — As to the German, while both forms have been used and defended by theologians, we feel that the practise prevailing in our synodical circles of using the form, "Ich glaube eine heilige christliche Kirche," exclusively is commendable as being the best and almost universal practise. — With regard to the English, the case is somewhat different. According to present usage, "*to believe in*" may either express trust and confidence in, or may simply mean to accept as a fact the (present or future) existence of. Moreover, this form is used by very good writers. Nevertheless, we would have preferred the use of the form, "*I believe a* holy Christian Church." And in this book we use the other form against our own preference simply because we desire to avoid discord between this book and the exposition of the Catechism in the use of which it is to be an aid. Our reasons for preferring this form are: —

1. The form, "*I believe the* Holy Christian Church," is also good English. Thus in the "Common Service" our congregations, when confessing the Nicene Creed, say, "And I believe one holy Christian and Apostolic Church." [See *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book*, p. 7.]

2. While both forms *may* mean the right thing, this form expresses only what we actually want to say, and leaves no room for Romanizing thoughts.

3. This form alone is in clear harmony with the evident usage and intention of the language of the English Authorized Version of the Bible. In that entire volume we have not found a single instance of the use of the expression "*to believe in*," except where it refers to the Deity. Nor can we recognize the objection that this is merely accidental. On the one hand, this supposition is precluded by the nicety of distinctions which the Authorized Version makes in the choice of expressions — a nicety in which it excels even our German version. On the other hand, while there is no instance in the Bible of the word "*believe*" in a connection

which would be clearly and fully parallel to the expression “to believe a Church,” it is certainly significant that the Authorized Version refuses to render the Hebrew *aman bo* or the Greek *pisteuein en* or *pisteucin eis* as “to believe in,” not only where they are used in connection with persons, but also where they mean “to put faith, trust, or confidence in” the Word of God. [Thus, Ps. 119, 66: “I have believed Thy commandments”; Mark 1, 15: “Believe the Gospel”; 1 John 5, 10: “He that believeth not the record that God gave of His Son.”] The evident intention of the English Bible is to use the expression “to believe in” with reference to God *only*. And while the other form may be conceded to be good English, we believe that in religious parlance this is commendable as being the *best* and *clearest* usage.)

**INTRODUCTION.**—We have confessed, “I believe in the Holy Ghost,” that is, I trust and rely in Him as my Hope, my Helper. In the words of the explanation of the Third Article, we have shown that He is our *only* Hope, since “I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him.” We have also shown that He is a sure and mighty Helper, since “the Holy Ghost has by the Gospel called me, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.” We have, finally, seen that He is a ready Helper, since He would perform this work in all who hear the Gospel, and that such as are finally lost are but the victims of their own obstinate resistance.—The Third Article of the Creed now proceeds to speak of those in whom the work of the Holy Ghost is accomplished according to the will of God. With the Third Article we also confess: “I believe in . . . the holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints.” Qu. 184. When we say that we believe in the Church, we do not mean to say—which is our confession with regard to the Holy Ghost—that we place our trust and hope of salvation in the Church. We rather mean to say that we believe that there is a Church.—We shall now speak

#### **Of the Church. Qu. 184—193.**

##### **I. WHAT THE CHURCH IS. Qu. 185.**

We frequently use the word “church” in speaking of a body of men who gather in one place for the hearing of the Word of God and the use of the Sacraments, and who have their pastor, their own place of worship, etc., and who also have their own name to distinguish them from other, similar organizations. Hence we speak of Mount Calvary Church, St. John’s Church, etc. But that is not the sense in which the Third Article uses the word “church.”—Again, because churches usually have special buildings in which

they meet for the purpose of worship, we call these buildings "church-buildings," or also simply "churches." But this, too, is not the sense in which the Third Article uses the word.

a. What the Third Article means by the "Church" may be seen from these words of the explanation: "Even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth." These words tell us how the Church comes into existence. The Holy Ghost "gathers" it. This gathering is not an assembling in one place, but a bringing into the same spiritual condition. Whoever is brought into this spiritual condition is thereby added to, or gathered into, the number of those who are called the Church. The Church of which the Third Article speaks may, therefore, be called the "gathering" of men into the same spiritual condition. Another word for "gather" is "congregate." Hence a gathering is also called a "congregation." Therefore, we say that the Church is "*the congregation.*" Qu. 185.

b. The Church of which the Third Article speaks is the congregation, or gathering, which the Holy Ghost has gathered into the same spiritual condition. What that condition is, is seen from the words: "Even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth." The Holy Ghost gathers men into the Church whenever, by the Gospel, He calls, enlightens, and sanctifies them. Thus at Pentecost three thousand were added unto, or gathered into, the Church by the Gospel at Jerusalem. Acts 2.—Wherever and whenever the Holy Ghost calls men, He would also enlighten and sanctify them. That is His will. This will of the Holy Ghost is often frustrated by man's obstinate resistance. Qu. 183. But among the many who are called, Matt. 22, 14, there are also such as are also enlightened and sanctified, that is, become true living Christians. These are thus made such as are in harmony with the will of God, or holy. Another expression for "holy person" is "saint." The Holy Ghost, therefore, gathers men into the Church by making them saints; and hence the Church is the gathering of saints, or "*the congregation of saints.*" Qu. 185.—In the Third Article we call the Church the "*Communion of Saints.*" A communion is composed of two or more persons who are united by some common bond, or have something in common. The bond of communion which unites the Church, that which all its members have in common, is this, that they all have been called, enlightened, and sanctified, and hitherto kept in the true faith. Such people are also called Christians; and the body of all Christians is called "Christendom." We may therefore also define "the Church" as "*Christendom.*"

Qu. 185. — Again, saints, or Christians, are such as believe. And therefore the Church is properly said to be "*the . . . believers.*" Qu. 185. — Thus we see that the Church is "*the congregation of saints, that is, . . . Christendom,*" or "*the . . . believers.*" Qu. 185.

c. We have heard that the Holy Ghost gathers men into the Church by calling, enlightening, and sanctifying them. From this fact we know that the Church is composed of Christians, or believers. It is faith or unbelief, therefore, which makes us members of, or excludes us from, the Church.

1. We become and remain members of the Church by faith alone. Though we may have been baptized many years ago; though we may regularly hear, read, and speak the Word of God; though we call ourselves Christians, and be regarded as such by others; though our names be entered upon the records of membership in some Christian, and even Lutheran, church organization; yea, though we be officers, teachers, or pastors in the Church, yet, if we are not believers in Christ, notwithstanding all outward appearances, we are in truth without that Church of which the Creed speaks. "*ONLY believers . . . are members of the Church.*" Qu. 185.

2. On the other hand, if we are called, enlightened, and sanctified, then we most assuredly are members of the Church. And though men should denounce our faith; and though they should cast us out, as the Jews cast out Christ and the apostles, and as the Pope cast out Luther; yea, though our own hearts should condemn us, yet we know that, before Him who is "greater than our heart and knoweth all things," 1 John 3, 20, we are members of His holy Christian Church. And though we feel our faith to be weak and faint, we know that He who is unwilling to break the bruised reed or to quench the smoking flax still numbers us with His Communion of Saints, and will "bring forth judgment unto truth." Is. 42, 3. For before God the Church embraces "*all Christendom, the whole number of all believers;*" for . . . all believers are members of the Church." Qu. 185.

That "*only* believers, and *all* believers, are members of the Church," Qu. 185, is seen from Eph. 2, 19—22. St. Paul is here speaking to such as had been "saved through faith," v. 8, that is, to believers. In ascribing to them membership in the Church, he describes the Church as a commonwealth, as a family, and as a temple.—The Church is likened to a commonwealth, or a nation. While without Christ they had been "*foreigners,*" "*aliens from the commonwealth,*" v. 12, they are now citizens. Those to whom he is speaking are not the only citizens. All the saints, that is, all Christians, belong

to this nation. They are “fellow-citizens with the saints,” have equal rights in the nation of God with all believers.— Again, he pictures the Church as a family, the family of God. Formerly they were “strangers,” but now they are “of the household of God,” enjoying equal rights and privileges with all other children of God.— Finally, St. Paul compares the Church to a temple. The foundation of this temple is “the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” that which the apostles and prophets have taught; “Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone,” the stone of special excellency which serves to bind in one, to adorn, strengthen, and uphold the entire structure. And in Him “all the building, fitly framed together, growtheth unto an holy temple in the Lord.” And the stones which are thus fitly framed together are the believers. For in Christ “ye,” the believers to whom Paul is speaking, “are builded together.”— Thus “only believers, and all believers, are members of the Church.” Qu. 185.

We have thus seen that the Church is “*the congregation of saints, all Christendom, the whole number of all believers; for ONLY believers, and ALL believers, are members of the Church.*” Qu. 185.

## II. WHAT ATTRIBUTES ARE ASCRIBED TO THE CHURCH.

Qu. 186—189.

a. In the Third Article we confess: “I believe in . . . the . . . Church,” that is, “I am of the firm conviction that there is in existence at all times a holy Christian Church.” The use of the word “I believe” in this connection expresses a two-fold fact.

1. The Church is *invisible*.—If we could see the Church, I would not say, “I believe,” but, “I see.” By confessing, “I believe a Church,” therefore, I acknowledge that I do not see the Church. And this is not my confession only, but the confession of all Christians upon the face of the whole earth. None can see that Church of which the Third Article speaks. That which cannot be seen is said to be “invisible.” Hence we confess, “I believe a Church,” “because the Church is invisible.” Qu. 186.

Why the Church is of necessity invisible will become apparent when we bear in mind who constitute the Church, namely, “only believers, and all believers.” Qu. 185. But to believe is not an act which we can see any one perform. Faith is the confidence of the *heart* in Christ. In order to see the Church, it would be necessary to look into the hearts of men to see who believes. This we cannot do. Of some we can with certainty say that they do *not* believe, namely,

of such as directly tell us that they do not, or of such as clearly show by their ungodly conduct that they do not believe. On the other hand, if one professes to be a believer, and outwardly lives as Christians should live, we ought most assuredly in Christian charity regard him as a believer. But at no time can we have absolute assurance of any one's faith, since faith lies hidden in the heart. And "*no man can look into another's heart and see if he believe.*" Qu. 186.

That we cannot see the Church is clearly taught in 2 Tim. 2, 19. The Church is here called "the foundation of God," because God has founded it. This Church still exists. But we cannot see who belongs to it; "the Lord knoweth them that are His." — In Luke 17, 20, 21 the Church is called "the kingdom of God," that is, the Kingdom of Grace, Qu. 142, which includes "only believers and all believers." Qu. 186. This Kingdom, the Church, "cometh not with observation"; we cannot observe, or see, its coming. Neither can we point to individual persons and say, "Lo here! or, Lo there!" that is, "This or that person is in the Kingdom of Grace," for "the kingdom of God," that which makes us members of this kingdom, "is within you," is the faith which is hidden in your hearts.

Thus we have learned that we do not say, "I see," but, "I believe, the Church," "*because the Church is invisible, since no man can look into another's heart and see if he believe.*" Qu. 186.

2. The Church is *enduring*. — Though we cannot see the Church, we nevertheless confess, "I believe in . . . the Church," that is, I am firmly convinced that the Church exists, and that it exists at the present time. And not only at the present time is this my confession, but it has been my confession in the past, and by the grace of God it shall be my confession unto the end. Moreover, it is the confession of all Christians from the days of the apostles, 2 Tim. 2, 19, and shall be the confession of all Christians to the end of days. The words, "I believe in . . . the Church," therefore, are intended to express the conviction of the existence of the Church "*at all times.*" Qu. 186.

But by expressing my firm conviction in regard to the permanency of the Church, the words, "I believe in . . . the Church," state even more. The Church, though a permanent body, is not always composed of the same persons. Of those who belonged to it in the days of the apostles, for instance, some have fallen away, 2 Tim. 2, 19, and all the rest have long since died, so that none of them belongs to the Church to-day. And thus it has been ever since that time, and will

be unto the end of the world. If, therefore, I confess that I believe that the Church is enduring and permanent, I also necessarily confess that I believe that, as some of its members depart, others are gathered into, and preserved in, the fold. In other words, I confess that I believe "*that the Holy Ghost at all times gathers and preserves a congregation of believers.*" Qu. 186.

All this I believe. I believe it with all the assurance of Christian faith. The assurance of Christian faith rests upon the statements of the Word of God alone. And my conviction has, indeed, Scriptural foundation.—Hymenaeus and Philetus, "who concerning the truth have erred, . . . overthrow the faith of some." 2 Tim. 2, 17. 18. But if any man falls away from the faith, that is his own loss only. He will perish, but the Church will stand. For St. Paul says: "Nevertheless the foundation of God," that is, the Church which God has founded, "standeth sure," 2 Tim. 2, 19, unshaken by man's unfaithfulness.—And this is in accordance with the promise which Christ has given to the Church. Peter had confessed: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus thereupon told him, Matt. 16, 18: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build My Church." "This rock" is the faith which Peter had confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And of the Church which is built upon this truth Christ says: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The gates of an ancient city were the places from which its attacking forces would break forth upon the enemy. Here "the gates of hell" are the forces of hell which attack the Church. The powers of hell will seek to destroy the Church. But they will not succeed.

True, the Church will be hard pressed, and its numbers diminished, at times. Thus in the days of Noah it had become very small. Gen. 6. And, again, in the days of Elijah many had fallen away. 1 Kings 19, 8—18. And we know that in the last days "the love of many shall wax cold." Matt. 24, 12. But in the days of the Flood, Noah and his family were still the Church; in the days of Elijah there were still seven thousand who had not bowed unto Baal; and even in the last days there will be a flock of true believers. There always has been a Church, and there always will be, while the earth endures. Therefore, being "*assured by the Scriptures that the Holy Ghost at all times gathers and preserves a congregation of believers,*" Qu. 186, I confess, "I believe in . . . the . . . Church."

We have seen, then, that we say, "I believe in . . . the Church,"

"1. Because the Church is invisible, since no man can look into another's heart and see if he believe;

"2. Because we are, nevertheless, assured by the Scripture that the Holy Ghost at all times gathers and preserves a congregation of believers." Qu. 186.

b. The Church is *one* Church.—We do not confess, "I believe in churches," but, "I believe in *the* Church," that is, "*one*," and *only one* "Church." We have already heard that the Church embraces "*all believers*." Qu. 185. Qu. 188. If, then, all believers are members of this one true Church, there can be no other church.—St. Paul exhorts us to meet brethren "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love," Eph. 2, 2, in order that peace might be preserved among Christians; for all discord is a violation of, and may destroy, the unity, the "*oneness*" of the Church. Then he proceeds, Eph. 2, 3—6, to describe this unity, a unity so close that he represents the Church as one body—not a physical body, whose life is a human soul, but a body whose life is the Holy Ghost. Therefore also it is called a "*spiritual body*." Qu. 187. And as every physical body has one head, so also "*Christ is the Head of the Church*." Eph. 5, 23. Qu. 187.

Thus we speak of the Church as being *one*, "*because all believers are one spiritual body, whose only Head is Christ*." Qu. 187.

c. The Church is *holy*.

1. We confess, "I believe in . . . the holy . . . Church." And we explain at once why we call the Church holy by adding the words, "the Communion of Saints."—We have heard that a communion is composed of two or more persons who are united by some common bond, or have something in common. The Church is a "*communion of saints*," that is, all its members have this in common, that they are saints. A saint is a holy person. We, therefore, call the Church a "*holy Church*" "*because all the members of the Church are holy*." Qu. 188.

This holiness is not theirs by their own virtue or strength, but they have received it as a gift. How and whence they have received it is seen from Eph. 5, 25—27. "*Christ . . . gave Himself for*" the Church. He has suffered and died in order "*that He might sanctify it*," that is, make it holy. And how His suffering and death could make it holy is explained in the words, "*and cleanse it*," that is, take away the uncleanness of sin. This holiness, this cleansing from sin, has been *won* for us by Christ's suffering and death. Having won holiness for us, however, He offered it to us "*by the*

washing of water by the word." And what Christ has thus offered we have accepted "by faith in Christ," Qu. 188, that faith which the Holy Ghost has wrought in us by water and the Word. Being thus clothed in Christ's merit, we, together with all other Christians, have become in the eyes of God "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but . . . holy and without blemish," without sin or imperfection. Thus all Christians have become holy "*by faith in Christ.*" Qu. 188. And hence we properly say that the Church is holy "*because all the members of the Church are holy by faith in Christ.*" Qu. 188.

2. But the members of the Church are not only holy by faith in Christ, but they are also "*sanctified in the true faith,*" so that they "walk in godliness and good works." Qu. 179. — In 1 Pet. 2, 5 Christians are called a "holy priesthood," holy priests. It was the duty of priests to offer sacrifices. Being priests, Christians also "offer up . . . sacrifices." These sacrifices are their works. And they are called "spiritual sacrifices" because Christians are prompted to perform them by the Holy Spirit. The bringing of sacrifices was a *service* commanded by God. Christians "*serve God with . . . works.*" Qu. 188. And though imperfect in themselves, these works are nevertheless "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (Compare what was said in explanation of Qu. 180, c. 7.) They are made perfect, or "holy," by the merits of Christ. Christians, therefore, "*serve God with holy works.*" Qu. 188. And since *all* Christians, that is, *all* members of the Church, "*serve God with holy works,*" we properly say that the Church as such is holy.

Thus we confess, "I believe in . . . the holy . . . Church, the Communion of Saints,"

"1. Because all members of the Church are holy by faith in Christ;

"2. Because they serve God with holy works." Qu. 188.

d. The Church is a *Christian* Church. — We say, "I believe in the . . . *Christian* Church." The word "*Christian*" is derived from "*Christ*." The Church is named after Him. Why this is done is seen from Eph. 2, 19—22. The Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," that is, the doctrine of these men of God; "Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone," the stone of special excellency, which binds, adorns, and strengthens the whole foundation. The "*chief corner-stone*," the glory, the strength, the common center of all the doctrines of the apostles and prophets, is Christ. And being "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," "*the Church is built upon*

*Christ.*" Qu. 189.—And "other foundation can no man lay." 1 Cor. 3, 11. We cannot build the Church upon any one or anything *instead of* on Christ; we cannot build it upon any foundation *in addition to* Christ. Christ is and must remain its only, "*its sole, Foundation.*" Qu. 188.

Hence we confess, "*I believe in the . . . Christian Church,*" "*because the Church is built upon Christ, its sole Foundation.*" Qu. 188.

We have thus learned that the Church is invisible and enduring, and that it is one, holy, and Christian Church. All this we confess in the words of the Creed, "*I believe in the . . . holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints.*" Qu. 184.

### III. WHERE THE CHURCH IS TO BE FOUND. Qu. 190—192.

Though the Church is invisible, we may nevertheless know for a certainty where it does, and where it does not, exist. We have certain knowledge of the *conditions* under which it may and must exist, and, hence, of the *visible bodies* of men within which it is found.

a. We may know of the presence or absence of the Church in a certain place by the *conditions* prevailing there.

1. We have heard that only such as are believers are members of the Church. Furthermore, we know that faith is wrought by the Holy Ghost through the Gospel alone. Hence there can be no Christians where men do not hear, or read, or meditate upon, the Gospel of Christ.—The Church, therefore, can be found "*only where the Gospel of Christ is in use.*" Qu. 190.

2. But how about those places where men do hear, read, and meditate upon, the Word of God? There the Holy Ghost operates through the Gospel in the hearts of men. There men are brought to faith through the Gospel. Hence the Church is to be found in every place "*wherever . . . the Gospel of Christ is in use.*" Qu. 190.—This we know from the Word of God. In Is. 55, 10, 11 we are told that God sends rain and snow from heaven for the purpose of making the earth fruitful. And this purpose is accomplished. True, some of the rain and snow falls upon stones and other places which are and remain unfruitful. Their failure to be made fruitful is, of course, due to their own nature and condition, and is not to be charged against the rain or snow. But this fact remains that, wherever there is rain or snow, there is always some vegetation springing up. Thus it is also with regard to the Word of God. It may fall upon some hearts which do not blossom forth in faith, or which soon relapse

into unbelief. (Luke 8, 4—15, the Parable of the Sower.) This is not the fault of the Word, but is due to the obstinate resistance of man. Qu. 183. Nevertheless, it remains true that, wherever the Word of God is in use, some hearts are brought to Christ. This we know "*according to God's promise,*" Qu. 190: "My Word . . . shall not return unto Me void," that is, "*without fruit.*" Qu. 190. This fruit which the Word produces is the faith which it works, the believer, the member of His Church.—Hence we know that the Church is to be found "*wherever . . . the Gospel of Christ is in use; for according to God's promise His Word does not remain without fruit.*" Qu. 190.

And thus we may answer the question as to where the Church is to be found by saying, "*Wherever, and only where, the Gospel of Christ is in use; for according to God's promise His Word does not remain without fruit.*" Qu. 190.

b. We may know also in what *visible bodies* of men the Church is to be found.—The Church is invisible. But we have seen that it is to be found "*wherever the Gospel of Christ is in use.*" While we cannot see the Church, we can see the body of men in a certain place among whom the Gospel of Christ is in use, or who "*are gathered about God's Word.*" Qu. 191. And according to God's promise, wherever we find a body of men gathered about God's Word, we know that there are true believers among them, or that the Church is in their midst.—They are not necessarily all Christians. Some of them may by word or deed show that they are still unbelievers. These are, of course, not members of the Church. But others say by word and outward deed that they are believers; they "*profess the Christian faith.*" Qu. 191. And since we know that the Church is in this body, and since it certainly does not include such as do not even by word and outward deed profess to be Christians, it must be found among those "*who profess the Christian faith and are gathered about God's Word.*" Qu. 191. But since we know that the Church does exist among these, we call this entire body "*a church.*" And since we can see this body of men who profess to be Christians and are gathered about the Word of God, we call it a "*visible Church.*" And as there are many such bodies in the world, we may even speak of many visible "*churches.*" The Bible itself uses the word "*church*" in this sense when it speaks of "*the seven churches in Asia,*" Rev. 1, 4, or the "*church of Ephesus,*" the "*church in Smyrna,*" Rev. 2, 1, 8, etc.—Again, we think of all these various churches as one large body, extending throughout the world, in which all profess to be Christians and are gathered about

the Word of God; and we call them all in one "the visible Church." — Thus, then, we speak of the *visible* Church when we mean to designate that body of men among whom the true invisible Church is most assuredly found, namely, "*the whole number of those who profess the Christian faith and are gathered about God's Word.*" Qu. 191.

We know that what is called the "visible Church" contains the true invisible Church. But we know more.—In Matt. 13, 24—26 the Savior calls the visible Church the "kingdom of God," and likens it to a wheat-field into which an enemy had sown tares, that is, a weed also called darnel. The wickedness of this act was the greater because this weed, before it comes to ear, is so similar in appearance to wheat that the master of the field could not permit his servants to try to destroy it for fear that they might destroy as much wheat as tares. Likewise, in the visible Church, the devil sows tares, people who, while they are unbelievers, are so similar to Christians in their speech and in their outward acts that men cannot distinguish the one from the other. People of this kind are called "hypocrites." Thus our Savior here teaches that "*there are also hypocrites,*" Qu. 191, in the visible Church. The same truth is taught in Matt. 13, 47. 48.—The Bible tells us this in order that we may not stumble if one who has always been supposed to be a good Christian is exposed as a hypocrite, or when unbelievers try to shake our faith by telling us that "there are so many hypocrites in the Church." Then we should remember that our Savior has told us that there was also wheat in the field, and good fishes in the net. Not *all* who profess to belong to the Church are hypocrites. But in the visible Church, "*besides the true Christians, there are also hypocrites.*" Qu. 191.

Thus the true invisible Church is found in the visible Church, that is, in "*the whole number of those who profess the Christian faith and are gathered about God's Word, but among whom, besides the true Christians, there are also hypocrites.*" Qu. 191.

c. The true invisible Church is found in the *divided* visible Church. — We have heard that the true invisible Church is *one* Church. The visible Church does not appear as one unity, but is divided into many parts, each of which differs from all others and has a special name, or denomination (whence the different parts are themselves called "denominations"), and each of which calls itself a church. And this division into various denominations, or churches, is not based upon a difference in such things only as would still leave them all one in doctrine, and which would in no wise be con-

trary to the Word of God, as, for instance, difference in language in the use or non-use of liturgical forms, in church customs, etc. But the various denominations differ from each other in the doctrines which they teach. (Here illustrations should be used, the principal denominations represented in the neighborhood being named and such differences pointed out as may exist without disturbing the unity in the faith, and also differences in doctrine.)

The question, then, arises, Is it right that the visible Church should be divided in doctrine? Is it right that there should be so many different churches, or denominations? In Matt. 28, 20 the Lord Jesus commands His Christians to teach "all nations," v. 19, "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." What the Lord has commanded is "*the doctrine of the Word of God.*" Qu. 192. And "whatsoever," that is, all of this, should be taught, "*the entire doctrine of the Word of God.*" Qu. 192. And it should be taught just as God has given it, without change and without addition, that is, "*in all its purity.*" Qu. 192. This "*entire doctrine of the Word of God in all its purity*" should dwell in all churches; they should "*have it.*" Qu. 192. They should also preach it both among their own members and among the churchless; they should "*teach*" it. Qu. 192. And they should teach it in such a way as to show that it is their own hearts' faith; they should "*confess*" it. Qu. 192.—We have heard that the Word of God is not only the spoken word, but that the Sacraments also are called the Word of God. Hence "*the Sacraments*" should be *administered.*" Qu. 192. And they should not be changed, but should be administered as Christ has instituted them, that is, "according to Christ's institution." Qu. 192. They should be administered at the proper time, in the proper manner, and to the proper persons; they should be administered "*duly.*" Qu. 192.—This, then, is the will of God, that all churches should "*have, teach, and confess the entire doctrine of the Word of God in all its purity, and*" that "*the Sacraments*" should be "*duly administered according to Christ's institution.*" Qu. 192.

If all churches would obey this command, there would be agreement among all in everything in which it is necessary, according to Christ's command, that all should be agreed. Then they would be truly one in their faith and doctrine.—But there is no such unity, because many churches disobey the command of Christ, and, in some points, "teach otherwise than God's Word teaches." That is, of course, a sin, a great sin. And it is important for every Christian that he should bear in mind the difference between such as fully obey and such as disobey, in any degree, the will of God. And in

order to emphasize this difference, we call those who fully obey the will of God with regard to His Word and the Sacraments the "*true visible Church*"; and we call such as depart from the will of God in one or more points "*false churches*."

In this term, "the true visible Church," we include *all* who thus comply with the will and command of Christ. At the present time only such as are called Lutherans come into this class. But there has been a church of the pure Word of God before ever the name Lutheran was known. And it is possible that, by the grace of God, some who do not now bear that name may come into full compliance with the command of Christ. All such, "*the whole number*," Qu. 192, are included in the designation "the true visible Church." On the other hand, the fact that some church-body calls itself Lutheran does not entitle it to this designation unless it also fully complies with the will of Christ.

We have spoken of "*false visible churches*." We have also heard that we call a body of men a "visible Church" because we know that there are Christians among them. If, therefore, we speak of "*false churches*," we do not mean to deny that there are Christians, yea, many dear children of God, among them. On the contrary, by calling them "churches," we express our firm conviction that there are Christians in their midst. A body which does not teach enough of the doctrine of the Word of God to enable men to learn to know that they are sinners saved by grace alone, is not a church in any sense, and has no right to claim that name. By calling any church a "*false church*," we state that, notwithstanding its errors, it is, nevertheless, a church, that is, that it still teaches so much of the truth that some may be saved thereby, and that there are children of God among them. But while they are still churches, they are *false churches* inasmuch as they do not *fully* conform to the will of Christ.

The true invisible Church, therefore, is found in the divided visible Church, and the true visible Church is "*the whole number of those who have, teach, and confess the entire doctrine of the Word of God in all its purity, and among whom the Sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's institution*." Qu. 192.

#### IV. THE PROPER USE OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH.

Qu. 193.

We have heard what the Creed means by the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints; we have also heard what is meant by the visible Church, both true and false. "It now remains to be seen how we are to use this knowledge,

a. The invisible Church includes "only believers, and all believers." Qu. 185. Upon our faith or unbelief, therefore, depends our membership or non-membership in the Church. Upon our faith or unbelief also depends our salvation or damnation. Mark 16, 16. Therefore we cannot be saved unless we are "*members of the invisible Church.*" Qu. 193. — Neither is it sufficient if we once have been members of this Church. If we would be saved, we must "*remain*" members of the Church unto the end. Matt. 10, 22. — And we must be very careful, "*take heed* to be and remain members of the invisible Church." Qu. 193. For we may easily deceive ourselves. We must not imagine that a "*faith of the head and of the mouth,*" Qu. 107, is sufficient, or that outward membership in the visible Church makes us members of the invisible Church. Yea, though we ourselves think that we are Christians, we may still in truth be without the Church. St. Paul wrote to just such people, to those who outwardly belonged to the Church at Corinth: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove," that is, form a correct estimate of, "*your own selves.*" 2 Cor. 13, 5. Moreover, if we are now in the faith, we must avoid every association with the world which would be a denial, and hence destructive of, our faith. 2 Cor. 6, 14—18. — This, then, is the first and most important use which we should make of our knowledge of the doctrine of the Church, that we "*take heed to be and remain members of the invisible Church.*" Qu. 193.

b. Having made sure that we are, and desire to remain, members of the invisible Church, it is furthermore necessary that we should take the proper measures to bring about this end.

1. For this purpose we must continue in the Word of Christ, that is, hear the Word regularly and diligently, in order that we may know the truth ever more fully and be freed more and more from the dominion of sin and of error. John 8, 31. 32. We must frequent the house of God and use the Means of Grace. In this way we become members of the visible Church in that place. (Note well that the outward organization of the local church as it is customary among us is not of divine ordinance, but is merely man's method of carrying on the work of God, and should be used only to aid, never to hinder, the work of God. It is the confession of the faith, the regular hearing of the Word, and the regular use of the Sacraments which make a person truly a member of the visible congregation. See Qu. 191.) To become and remain a member of the visible Church, therefore, is the duty of every Christian. Every Christian should "*adhere to*

*the Church.*" Qu. 193.—There are, however, many visible churches. Which one we should choose as our church is evident from John 8, 31, namely, that church which in all things continues in His Word, that is, we should "*adhere to the Church of the pure Word and confession.*" Qu. 193.

2. If, however, we are members of the Church, the work and duty of the Church are our work and duty. Therefore, every one who is a member of the Church, that is, every one who uses the Means of Grace with the congregation, Gal. 6, 6, is in duty bound to help provide for the continued public administration of the Means of Grace by giving of his means toward the *maintenance* of the preachers and teachers of the Word, 1 Cor. 9, 14; Gal. 6, 6, and other necessary expenses, and by willingly serving the Church by word and deed as God provides opportunity, 1 Cor. 12, 7. Another expression, which includes the giving of financial aid and every other service, is "*to contribute toward.*" Therefore, we say that every member of the Church is in duty bound to "*contribute toward its maintenance.*" Qu. 193.

But Christ has commanded the Church not only to provide for the maintenance of the office of the Word in their own midst, but also to "*teach all nations,*" Matt. 28, 19, that is, to *spread* the Word of God among all such as are not yet Christians, or to spread the Church. Another expression for "*the spreading of the Church*" is "*the extension of the Church.*" Qu. 193. This command also applies to every member of the Church, to every Christian. Every one should "*contribute,*" that is, help, in whatever way he can, according to his own station.—Thus it is the duty of every member of the Church "*to contribute toward its . . . extension.*" Qu. 193.

In what way and in what measure should the individual member contribute toward the maintenance and extension of the Church? The Bible does not give individual instructions on this point. Nor is it necessary. God has given to each one individual qualifications and individual opportunities. Thus some may offer themselves to become preachers or teachers of the Word, or to go forth as missionaries; others may provide the means; all may pray for the success of the work, etc. Upon these individual qualifications and opportunities will depend the service which the individual should render. God has given us His gifts in order that we should use them for the welfare of His kingdom upon earth, and commanded us to use them whenever, wherever, and in whatever measure we can. And he serves aright who serves willingly, gladly, and faithfully whenever he is able to do so, or "*according to his ability.*" Qu. 193.

Thus we use the doctrine of the Church aright "*when we, to this end,*" namely, to be and remain members of the invisible Church, "*adhere to the Church of the pure Word and confession,*" and "*contribute toward its maintenance and extension according to our ability.*" Qu. 193.

c. "To this end," namely, "to be and remain members of the invisible Church," we should "adhere to the Church of the pure Word and confession." We have heard that all other churches are called "*false churches.*" Qu. 193. What our attitude toward these should be is seen from Matt. 7, 15. A prophet is one who teaches the Word of God. Deut. 18, 18. A false prophet is one who asserts that he is, and outwardly appears to be, a true prophet, speaking the Word of God (this assertion and appearance is also called "*sheep's clothing*"), but whose teachings vary from the doctrine of the Bible. In whatever point of doctrine, therefore, false churches depart from the Word of God, they are false prophets. And with regard to false prophets, the Lord commands, "Beware of them." We do not beware of them by having fellowship with them in religious things. We beware of them only if, in all things pertaining to religion, we keep away from them, or "*avoid*" them. Qu. 193.—In 1 John 4, 1 the apostle warns us that "*many false prophets are gone out into the world.*" Therefore we are not to believe every spirit, every one who says that he is preaching the Word of God. Before having spiritual communion with such, we should "*try*" them, test them whether they are of God. The test which we are to apply is the Word. If in any point their teachings differ from the Bible, they are, in that point, not of God, and we should not believe them, but show our dissent also in this way that we avoid them.—In Rom. 16, 17 St. Paul pleads with Christians to "*mark them,*" that is, to note carefully who they are, "*that cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which*" the Romans had learned, that is, the doctrine of the Bible. And they should mark them for the purpose that they might "*avoid them,*" that is, have no religious fellowship with them.—Thus we should "*avoid all false churches.*" Qu. 193.—And the reason why we should avoid them is stated in the words, "*Inwardly they are ravening wolves.*" Matt. 7, 15. Wolves are dangerous; they may destroy the body. So, also, false prophets are dangerous; by their false teachings they may destroy the soul, causing us to err from the faith, and thus to lose membership in the invisible Church.—Hence "*to this end,*" that we may be and remain members of the invisible Church, we should "*avoid all false churches.*" Qu. 193.

Thus we have seen that we properly use the doctrine of the Church "*when we take heed to be and remain members of the visible Church; when we, to this end, adhere to the Church of the pure Word and confession, contribute toward its maintenance and extension according to our ability, and avoid all false churches.*" Qu. 193.

And all that we have thus heard from the Word of God concerning the Church, we include in the confession: "*I believe in the . . . holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints,*" and: "*The Holy Ghost . . . calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.*"

**CONCLUSION.** — This is the Bible-doctrine concerning the Church. Let us rejoice in the fact that, through faith, we are united into one holy nation with all the true children of God. Let us ever be mindful of the obligations which our high station imposes upon us. And let us carefully guard our footsteps, lest by indifference with regard to the privileges, duties, or dangers we forfeit the glorious prestige which our Father has given us in Christ Jesus.

### III. THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

**INTRODUCTION.** — The Third Article of the Creed has until now spoken of the person and of the work of the Holy Ghost. It has shown how, through His work, the Holy Ghost gathers the holy Christian Church upon earth, and keeps it with Christ Jesus. It now proceeds to speak of the benefits which He bestows upon us in this holy Christian Church. And it mentions especially three gifts, namely, the Forgiveness of Sins, the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life Everlasting. — The first of these is *the Forgiveness of Sins*.

#### I. THAT GOD FORGIVES SINS. Qu. 195. 196.

We and all men are sinners. Sin is the transgression of the Law. And transgression of the Law must bring upon the offenders the wrath and punishment of the Judge. This punishment is an everlasting punishment. Therefore we are all without hope, unless we can get rid of our sins. Our own efforts, however, are unavailing here. For all our endeavors to make atonement for our sins are ever insufficient. Matt. 18, 23—25. If God should "mark iniquities," that is, take note of them and deal with us accordingly, none could stand before Him. Ps. 130, 3. Only if God does not deal with us according to our sins, that is, if God *forgives* them, can we hope to escape everlasting suffering. Matt. 18, 27. —

Moreover, *God* must do this. For all sin is sin against God's Law, and hence is truly forgiven only if God forgives it. Mark 2, 7. Ps. 130, 3: "If *Thou* shouldest mark iniquities."

a. There is forgiveness with God. This we *know*. We do not merely suppose it, nor have we formed that opinion or conclusion as a result of reasoning. We know it with Christian faith, that is, we have Bible-promises to that effect. "*By the Scriptures I am assured that God . . . forgives . . . sins.*" Qu. 195. Therefore I say: "I believe . . . the forgiveness of sins." — Such Bible-promises are: "There is forgiveness with Thee," Ps. 130, 4; "The Lord . . . forgiveth . . . thine iniquities," Ps. 103, 4; "We have . . . the forgiveness of sins," Eph. 1, 7. — Neither does this forgiveness include only some sins, but "*all sins.*" Ps. 103, 4. Qu. 195. — Therefore, also, forgiveness must be given us anew every day. "For we daily sin much"; hence, if God forgives *all* sins, He "*daily*" forgives our sins. Qu. 195. — Moreover, "*we daily sin much.*" Our sins are innumerable and great. But God's forgiveness is greater still than all our sins together. Ps. 103, 11, 12. He abundantly, or "*richly*, forgives all sins." Qu. 195. — Thus I confess, "*I believe . . . the forgiveness of sins,*" "*because by the Scriptures I am assured that God . . . daily and richly forgives all sins.*" Qu. 195.

b. God *forgives* sins. Let us here pause to ask what the Bible means when it says that God *forgives* sins. Qu. 196. — When a man who is accused of a crime is brought into court and found to be innocent, the court will say that he is "*not guilty.*" We say the court "*acquits*" him. The Bible, in such a case, uses the word to "*justify.*" Deut. 25, 1. — We also come before God as before our Judge. In fact, we are before Him as before our Judge at all times. And as our Judge He passes upon our guilt or innocence. And now the Bible tells us that He "*justifies*" us, Rom. 3, 28, that is, He *acquits* us, "*He declares*" us "*righteous.*" Qu. 196. — Why does He declare us *righteous*? Have we not sinned? "*There is no difference; for all have sinned.*" Rom. 3, 22, 23. Qu. 198. If He should look upon men as they are, He could not *justify* them. Ps. 130, 3. But He does not look upon their sins. They have sinned; but He does not charge their sins against them; "*He does not impute their sins to sinners.*" Qu. 196. Neither will He, having Himself declared them *righteous*, permit anybody else to accuse them of sin. Rom. 8, 33. — God thus deals with the sinner as did the king with his wicked servant. Matt. 18, 23—27. — Thus, when the Bible says that God *forgives* sins, it means that "*He does not im-*

*pute their sins to sinners, or, in other words, He declares sinners righteous.” Qu. 196.*

We have now learned that “*I am by the Scriptures assured that God . . . daily and richly forgives all sins.*” Qu. 195.

## II. WHY GOD FORGIVES SINS. QU. 195.

a. God forgives our sins *by grace*. — In Eph. 1, 7 we are told that “we have . . . the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of *His grace*.” And in Rom. 3, 24, Qu. 198, we read that we are “justified freely by *His grace*.” The fundamental meaning of “grace” is “love.” God justifies us “by grace” means, He forgives us all sins “because of His love.” — If, then, it is God’s love which prompts Him to forgive us our sins, it is not because we have earned or deserved it by our works. For “to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” Rom. 4, 4. See also Rom. 11, 6. Therefore St. Paul tells us that “a man is justified . . . without the works of the Law.” Rom. 3, 28. — Thus God forgives us our sins not because of our works, but “*by grace*.” Qu. 195.

b. God forgives our sins *for Christ’s sake*. — God is just. Qu. 104. According to His justice, He cannot break His word, namely, that He will punish all sin. How, then, can He forgive sins? — In Rom. 3, 25, Qu. 198, we read that God has set forth Christ “to be a propitiation.” To “propitiate” means “to regain favor by removing offense.” Through our offenses we had lost God’s favor. Christ has made amends for our offenses before God, and has thus regained God’s favor for us. He has propitiated God for us. Therefore He is called our “propitiation.” — In what manner He has propitiated God for us is seen from Eph. 1, 7. He has redeemed us with His blood. He has shed His blood because God “hath made Him to be sin for us,” 2 Cor. 5, 21, Qu. 196, laid our sins upon Him, and punished Him as though He had sinned. Hence our sin has been punished in Christ. And now God accepts Christ’s punishment as though we had been punished, and declares us free from sin, or forgives us our sins. We say, “God . . . for Christ’s sake . . . forgives all sins.” Qu. 195. — Thus the reasons which prompt God to forgive sins are His love and the merits of Christ. In other words, God forgives sins “*by grace, for Christ’s sake*.” Qu. 195.

## III. BY WHAT MEANS GOD FORGIVES SINS. QU. 195. 197.

God forgives sins because He loves us and because Christ has died for us.

a. The forgiveness which God gives by grace for Christ’s

sake has been won for all men.—God loved “the world,” that is, *all* men. John 3, 16. And Christ died for *all* men. “God was in Christ, reconciling the *world* unto Himself.” 2 Cor. 5, 19, Qu. 197. In the Bible, “to reconcile” means “to make acceptable by removing offense.” In Christ, God has removed the offenses, the sins, of the whole world, and is “not imputing their trespasses unto them,” that is, unto the world, unto all men. Hence forgiveness of sins “*has been procured for all men.*” Qu. 197.

b. What has thus been procured for all men should be had by all. For this purpose, God “hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation.” 2 Cor. 5, 19. The “Word of Reconciliation” is the Gospel. This Gospel God has “committed,” entrusted, to us for the purpose that we should preach it to all men. As a bank check does not only tell us of a sum of money, but also makes us possessors of it, so the Gospel tells us of the reconciliation which Christ has won for us, and makes us possessors of it. This is the reason why it is called the “Word of Reconciliation.” God has placed “reconciliation,” the forgiveness of sins, into the Gospel, and wherever the Gospel is, there is also the forgiveness of sins. And to whomsoever the Gospel is preached, to him is brought and offered the forgiveness of sins. Therefore we also say that the Gospel is the hand of God, in which He holds the forgiveness of sins, and with which He offers it to us. And whoever hears the Gospel has this offer of the forgiveness of sins.—Forgiveness “*is offered by the Gospel to all who hear it.*” Qu. 197.

Since forgiveness of sins is given through the Gospel only, and since the Gospel is found in, and proclaimed by, the holy Christian Church alone, we say in the explanation of the Third Article that God “*in the Christian Church . . . forgives all sins.*” And since, through the Gospel, the Holy Ghost approaches us with the offer of the forgiveness of sins, we say that “*the Holy Ghost . . . forgives all sins.*” (See *Large Catechism*, 456, 42—45, 54—56.)

We thus see that the forgiveness of sins “*has been procured for all men, and is by the Gospel offered to all who hear it,*” Qu. 197, or “*that God . . . through the Gospel . . . forgives all sins.*” Qu. 195.

#### IV. TO WHOM GOD FORGIVES SINS. QU. 195. 197.

We have heard that God forgives sins through the Gospel, that is, that the Gospel is God’s hand into which He has placed the forgiveness, and which He holds out to man in order that man should take this divine gift, and that this

offer of forgiveness is truly made to every one who hears the Gospel.

a. But the gift which God's hand thus holds forth to us will not come into our possession unless we stretch forth our hand and take it. What that hand is with which we take the forgiveness is seen from Gen. 15, 6. Abraham was accounted righteous, his sins had been forgiven, because he believed in the Lord. Hence believing in the Lord, true faith, is the hand which takes the forgiveness from God's hand of the Gospel.—Likewise, in Rom. 4, 5, we are told that "faith is counted for righteousness," faith being the hand which takes the forgiveness of sins.—In Rom. 3, 28 we hear "that a man is justified by faith," he is declared righteous because of that faith which takes the forgiveness from God's hand of the Gospel. And from Rom. 3, 25 we see that Christ becomes the propitiation for the individual sinner "through faith in His blood."—It was through faith also that the publican, Luke 18, 22—25, was justified. For He came before God confessing His sins because he believed that there is forgiveness with God.—We accept the forgiveness of our sins by faith. Contrariwise, if we do not believe the Gospel, we do not accept, we do not have, forgiveness. Hence, although it has been procured for all men, and is offered by the Gospel to all that hear it, yet only *those who believe the Gospel and thus accept the forgiveness of sins actually become partakers of such forgiveness.*" Qu. 197. Hence "God . . . forgives all sins to . . . all believers." Qu. 195.

b. But in the Creed I not only confess in a general way that God forgives sins to believers. This the devils also believe. I rather say, "*I believe . . . the forgiveness of sins.*" That is *my* faith, my *Christian* faith, my *hope*, my *confidence*. This means that I believe that forgiveness is given to *me* through the Gospel, that it is *mine*. Not only mine, but most assuredly mine.—"*God . . . forgives all sins to me and all believers.*" Qu. 195.

We have now learned that "*by the Scriptures I am assured that God by grace, for Christ's sake, through the Gospel, daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers.*" Qu. 195.

#### V. THAT WE CAN AND SHOULD HAVE FIRM INDIVIDUAL ASSURANCE OF THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. Qu. 199.

Can I be sure that I have forgiveness of sins and salvation? And can every believer have such firm assurance?—Some have denied this. (Romanism.) But what does the Bible say? St. Paul was a Christian. And Rom. 8, 38, 39 he tells us that he is persuaded, firmly convinced, that no power

in heaven, or earth, or hell "shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." That is firm assurance indeed. And what reason has he to feel so sure? He says: "I know whom I have believed." 2 Tim. 1, 12. Some One has promised him forgiveness. And He firmly believes this promise. For He who has given it is God. And God cannot lie or deceive. Hence there is not the slightest vestige of doubt or uncertainty with St. Paul.—I, too, have this promise. I, too, have received it from the Lord. To doubt here is ungodliness. For "he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." 1 John 5, 10. 11.—We are sure of the forgiveness of our sins and of salvation. We "*can and should be, because God's promise is sure.*" Qu. 199.

**CONCLUSION.**—We believe and confess "*that we receive forgiveness of sins and are justified before God, not by works, but by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith.*" Qu. 198. "Of this article nothing can be yielded or surrendered, even though heaven and earth and all things should sink to ruin," *Smalcald Articles*, 300, 5, "*because it is the chief article of Christian doctrine,*" Qu. 200. Whoever still believes this article is still a Christian and a child of God. And whosoever rejects this article is not a Christian, no matter what else he may believe or disbelieve.—By this article "*the Christian Church distinguishes itself from all false religions.*" Qu. 200. For all false religions (including the religion of the present-day lodges) teach that man may become acceptable before God through that which he does or leaves undone, or which he tries to do or to leave undone. And to whatever extent any one departs from the article of the forgiveness of sins by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, to that extent he relapses into heathenism.—This article "*gives all the glory to God alone,*" Qu. 200, all the glory of our deliverance from eternal damnation, inasmuch as it sets forth that salvation is the free gift of God in Christ, without merit or worthiness on our part.—This article "*affords enduring comfort to poor sinners,*" Qu. 200, inasmuch as it does not ask man to earn salvation, but bids him depend upon Christ alone, whose blood and righteousness is always to deliver us from wrath. Therefore, to the poor and contrite heart this article is heavenly music, sanctifying his joys in prosperity and soothing his aching heart when suffering, distress, and the shadows of death seem to speak only of God's wrath and displeasure. Matt. 9, 1—8.

**IV. THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.**

**INTRODUCTION.** — We have heard that the work of the Holy Ghost consists in this, that He sanctifies us. But though the Holy Ghost is carrying on His work in us, our old sinful nature is not yet entirely dead, but lives, and actively clings to us in all our worship and service of God. Hence "now we are only half pure and holy, so that the Holy Ghost has ever to continue His work in us through the Word, and daily to dispense forgiveness." *Large Catechism*, 459, 58. And Christians sorely feel this "bondage of sin which is in my members," Rom. 7, 23, and longingly look forward to "that life where there will be no more forgiveness, but only perfectly pure and holy people, full of godliness and righteousness, delivered and free from sin, from death, and from all evil, in a new, immortal, and glorified body." *Large Catechism*, 459, 58. Into this condition we confidently hope to enter. And we give expression to such firm hope by confessing: "I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body." Qu. 201. — We shall now speak of *the Resurrection of the Body*.

**I. THAT THE DEAD SHALL RISE. Qu. 202.**

a. We confess: "I believe in the *resurrection of the body*." Qu. 201.

1. What is meant by the resurrection is seen from John 5, 28: "All that are in the graves . . . shall come forth." They "that are in the graves" are such as are dead. For only the dead are laid into graves, as Lazarus was laid in the grave when he was dead. John 11. Hence the resurrection takes place only with "*the dead*." Qu. 202. — The dead "shall come forth"; they shall come out of the graves as Lazarus came forth. We say they shall rise again. The resurrection, therefore, is "*the rising again*" of the dead. — Lazarus did not rise of his own power or resolve, but because Christ called him. Christ caused him to rise, or *raised* him. So also in the resurrection of which the Third Article speaks, they "that are in the graves" shall come forth because they "shall hear His voice." Christ "*will raise up . . . the dead*." Qu. 202. — Lazarus did not remain in death when he came out of the grave. He was alive. He had been made alive by the voice of Christ. So also in the resurrection of which the Third Article speaks, by the voice of Christ, "*the dead . . . shall again be made alive*." Qu. 202.

2. In the Bible we find many instances of the raising of such as had died. But in all these cases only individuals

or a limited number of persons were raised. But it will not be so in the resurrection of which the Creed speaks. In John 5, 28 we read: "*All* that are in the graves . . . shall come forth." "*All* that are in the graves" denotes not only such as have actually been buried in graves, but also such as have been sunk in the sea, or burned to ashes, or devoured by wild beasts, etc., in short, all the dead. Rev. 20, 13; Matt. 25, 32. — Thus Christ "will raise up . . . *all* the dead"; "*all* the dead . . . shall again be made alive." Qu. 202.

3. All the dead shall be raised at the same time, in the selfsame "hour." John 5, 28. That hour will be at hand when Christ will come "to execute judgment." John 5, 27. It will be an hour of the Day of Judgment, or the "Last Day." See Qu. 166. "At the *Last Day*" Christ "will raise up . . . all the dead." Qu. 202.

Thus, when we say: "I believe in . . . the *resurrection* of the body," we confess as our faith "*that at the Last Day God will raise up . . . all the dead*," or, "*that at the Last Day . . . all the dead . . . shall again be made alive*." Qu. 202.

b. We confess: "I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body." Qu. 201.

1. We know that man is not composed of body only, but of body and soul. Matt. 10, 28. Nevertheless, we do not speak of the resurrection of the soul, but of the body only. We do this advisedly. For only that part of man can have part in the resurrection which has died. Now, we know that the body dies and is laid into the grave. And hence there can be, and shall be, a resurrection of the body. But the soul does not die. Matt. 10, 28; Eccl. 12, 7; Luke 23, 43. Hence, also, there can be no resurrection of the soul. But at the Last Day the soul, which has never died, shall again enter the body which has returned to the dust from which it was taken. Since, then, the soul does neither die nor rise again, we confess that we believe the resurrection of the body. We believe "*that our bodies . . . shall again be made alive*." Qu. 202.

2. And these bodies shall be the identical bodies in which we have here lived and died. "*All that are in the graves . . . shall come forth.*" Those bodies shall come forth which are in the graves; and they were laid into the graves because they had died. Hence the bodies which shall rise are "*the same bodies that have died*." Qu. 202. — That in the resurrection we shall have the same bodies in which we have here lived and died is very clearly and comfortingly prophesied

by Job, 19, 25—27. Qu. 203: “Yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom . . . mine eyes shall behold, and not another.”—Thus we shall rise with “*our bodies, the same bodies that have died.*” Qu. 202.

This we confess in the words: “I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body,” namely, “*that our bodies, the same bodies that have died, shall again be made alive.*” Qu. 202.

c. This “I believe.”

1. *I believe it.*—I am not in any doubt whatever. “*I know*” it. Job 19, 25. The source of such knowledge is not human reason or the opinion of men. Human reason cannot grasp or understand it. Therefore, such as would deny whatever is above their human intellect have at all times ridiculed the Christian hope of resurrection. Thus did the Sadducees in the days of Christ and the apostles. Matt. 22, 23; Acts 23, 8. Thus did the highly educated Athenians. Acts 17, 32. And in their footsteps are following modern Sadducees and such as are wise in their own conceit. However, we are not in the least shaken in our hope by ridicule or arguments of human reason. We have taken our assurance from the *Word of God.* And trusting in the sure and definite promises of the Scriptures, we confess: “*I believe a resurrection of the body.*”

And we will not be disappointed in our faith. He who has promised can perform it. And He to whom will fall the task of raising the dead cannot fail. “All that are in the graves shall hear *His* voice,” that is, the voice of Christ. In the days of His humiliation the dead rose at His command. John 11, 43. 44, etc. Neither shall they fail to hear His voice when He comes in glory. With him nothing shall be impossible, Luke 1, 37; for Christ is God. Hence I can say with unbounded confidence, “*I believe the resurrection,*” because “*God will raise up . . . all the dead.*” Qu. 202.

2. *I believe it.*—God will raise up all the dead. But that which is especially comforting to me is this, that I shall be among them. Christ is “*my Redeemer*”; “*in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold.*” Job 19, 25—27.—“*God shall raise up me and all the dead.*” Qu. 202.

Thus I confess: “*I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body,*” because according to the *Scriptures* I know “*that at the Last Day God will raise up me and all the dead, so that our bodies, the same bodies that have died, shall again be made alive.*” Qu. 202.

## II. THAT THE DEAD SHALL RISE WITH DIFFERENCES OF CONDITION AND OF DESTINY.

We have seen that "God will raise up *me* and *all* the dead." Qu. 202. As to the fact of their resurrection, there will be no difference. But there will be a difference in the eternal condition of those who will have been raised up. A great multitude, "many," will rise; but this great multitude will not share any one condition as a unit, but will be judged individually, and the individuals assigned to one of two classes, the one class awaking "to everlasting life," the other class, "to everlasting shame and contempt." Dan. 12, 2.

### a. "Some to everlasting life."

1. In John 5, 29 (Qu. 202) we are told that "they that *have done good*" shall come forth unto the resurrection of life. We have heard that only children of God, that is, believers, can do good works. Qu. 180. "They that have done good," therefore, are "*believers*." And they are not saved because they have done good works, but because they have believed, their good works being the evidence of their faith. (See also what was said concerning the rule according to which Christ will pronounce final judgment. Qu. 166.) Thus they who shall awake to everlasting life are "*the believers*." Qu. 203.

2. The believers shall come forth "unto the resurrection of *life*." John 5, 29. Life had been lost through sin, and man had become a slave of death and of all that is implied in death. But Christ has bought us back from the slavery of sin, and will, in the resurrection, fully restore us to that life which we had lost. Therefore Job calls Him the "Redeemer." As our Redeemer, He, *Christ*, will raise us up unto life.—But what Christ has done, and will still do, for us is made our own through the work of the Holy Ghost. Hence the resurrection of life is ours because of the work which the Holy Ghost has performed in our hearts. Therefore, the explanation of the Third Article says that "*the Holy Ghost . . . will raise up me*."—And this life unto which we shall rise is "everlasting life," Dan. 12, 2, a life nevermore to be lost or to come to an end.—Thus "*the believers will rise to everlasting life*." Qu. 203.

3. In common with all mankind, the believers will rise with "*the same bodies that have died*." Qu. 202, Job 19, 25—27. But though they will be the identical bodies which have died, yet, being destined to live forever before God, they will be in a changed condition. Now they are "*vile bodies*," Phil. 2, 21, that is, "*bodies of humiliation*"—humiliated by

sin and the consequences of sin. Then they shall be "fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body," without weakness, ailment, unseemliness, or imperfection, and no longer bound by the Laws of time and space. Luke 24, 31; John 20, 19—26.—The bodies of such believers as will still be living at the time of Christ's coming will not die, but they will be changed "in the twinkling of an eye," so that they will become like the bodies of those believers who will have died and risen again. 1 Cor. 15, 51. 52.—Thus the bodies of all believers will be made like unto Christ's glorious body, will be made glorious, will be "*glorified*." Qu. 203.

We learn, then, that "*the believers will rise with glorified bodies to everlasting life.*" Qu. 203.

b. "Some to shame and everlasting contempt."

1. "They that *have done evil*," John 15, 29, shall come forth unto the resurrection of damnation.—"They that have done evil" are such as not only have sinned,—for all have sinned, Rom. 3, 25,—but have also remained in their sins through unbelief (see Qu. 166), hence "*unbelievers*." Qu. 203.

2. Unbelievers also shall come forth from the grave according to body and soul. But they shall be raised in order that God may "destroy both soul and body in hell." Matt. 10, 28.—Some have said that God will annihilate unbelievers, that is, return them to nothingness. And well might unbelievers wish that this were true. For annihilation would be complete at some time, and then they would no longer be in suffering. But Christ does not say that they will be annihilated, but that they will be destroyed in hell. Hell is a place of suffering and misery; and a person is said to be destroyed also when he is brought into ruin and misery. Hence the words of Christ would warn us to beware lest we be cast into the ruin and misery of hell. The Scriptures, therefore, teach that unbelievers will be made to suffer "*in hell*." Qu. 203.—

That unbelievers will be in suffering in hell is seen from the example of the rich man, who "*in hell . . . lift up his eyes, being in torments.*" Luke 16, 23. 24. Unbelievers will be "*in torment in hell.*" Qu. 203.—They will bear "shame and contempt." Dan. 12, 2. Their *shame* will be that by sin and unbelief they have caused their own damnation. And they will feel this shame, their own conscience ever judging and condemning them, like a worm gnawing at their hearts. Is. 66, 24.—They will bear "*contempt.*" Their condition of guilty agony and woe will be so horrible as to fill with disgust and loathing all who see them. They "*shall be an abomi-*

nation unto all flesh." Is. 66, 24.—And this their destruction will be an "*everlasting destruction.*" 2 Thess. 1, 9; Dan. 12, 2; Is. 66, 24.—They will be in "*everlasting shame, contempt, and torment, in hell.*" Qu. 203.

All unbelievers without exception will thus be destroyed in hell. Yet the suffering of some will be greater than that of others. There will be various *degrees of damnation.* And the greatest torment will be visited upon such as have heard the Gospel and still did not believe. Luke 12, 47, 48.

The condition of unbelievers in eternity will thus be the very reverse of the condition of the believers. And as the condition of believers is called eternal life, the Bible describes the condition of unbelievers as "*eternal death.*" Qu. 203.—"*The unbelievers will rise to eternal death, that is, to everlasting shame, contempt, and torment, in hell.*" Qu. 203.

c. We have spoken of a *twofold* lot, a twofold destiny of man in the resurrection. Romanists have said that there is a third place between heaven and hell, where the souls of Christians are purged of sins before they may enter into heaven—a place which they call purgatory. But such teaching is contrary to the Bible. The Word of God knows of but two divisions of men in the resurrection. John 5, 29; Dan. 12, 2. And the same holds good with regard to the souls of men between death and the resurrection, as is seen from the history of the rich man and Lazarus. Luke 16, 19—31. The rich man passed into hell immediately, and Lazarus was at once "*carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.*"

We have thus seen that "*the believers will rise with glorified bodies to everlasting life; but the unbelievers will rise to eternal death, that is, to everlasting shame, contempt, and torment, in hell.*" Qu. 203.

**CONCLUSION.**—There is a twofold destiny toward which men are tending, life and destruction. There is none other.—There are two gates and two ways which men may enter—the strait gate and the narrow way, and the wide gate and the broad way. The strait gate and the narrow way is the gate and the way of sanctification by the Spirit of God. The wide gate and the broad way is the way of unbelief and sin. There is no third way. By the grace of God, let us choose wisely. "*Enter ye in at the strait gate.*" Matt. 7, 13.

## V. THE LIFE EVERLASTING.

**INTRODUCTION.**—We have learned that, while "*unbelievers will rise to eternal death, that is, to everlasting shame, contempt, and torment, in hell,*" "*the believers will rise . . . to*

everlasting life." Qu. 203. This everlasting life is the last point which is mentioned in the Creed. It is the end toward which the entire Creed has been tending. For we are created, redeemed, and sanctified for this purpose, that we should inherit eternal life. It is the fulfilment of all our hopes and longings in Christ, toward which we look forward with all confidence, confessing, "I believe in . . . the life everlasting." Qu. 204.—We shall now speak of the *Life Everlasting*.

### I. WHAT THE SCRIPTURES TEACH CONCERNING LIFE EVERLASTING. Qu. 205.

#### a. What is the life everlasting?

1. In John 10, 27, 28 Christ speaks of His "sheep." He describes them as such as hear His voice and follow Him. His sheep, therefore, are His Christians, or "*all believers*." Of these He says: "I give unto them eternal life."—The life everlasting, therefore, is that life which shall be entered into by "*all believers*." Qu. 205.

2. In Luke 23, 43 Christ says to the believing malefactor upon the cross, "To-day shalt thou be *with Me* in paradise." And in His sacerdotal prayer, Christ prays, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be *with Me* where I am." Christians shall be "*in paradise*," "*where I am*," in heaven, with Christ.—Eternal life consists in this, that "*all believers*" shall be "*present with Christ . . . and live with Him*." Qu. 205.

3. We shall be with Christ; "*we shall see Him as He is*," 1 John 3, 2, and *behold His glory*, John 17, 24. To behold God is the highest bliss of which the heart of man is capable. Ps. 42, 2. Hence to be "*in Thy presence*" is to be in "*fulness of joy*," in "*pleasures forevermore*." Ps. 16, 11.—It is to be in "*fulness of joy*," in joy which satisfies not only because of its own greatness, but also because there will be nothing to disturb it. Even while we are upon earth, we are already through faith united with Christ. But here our happiness is ever disturbed by the consciousness of the bondage in which we are still held by sin. Rom. 7, 22—24. In eternal life, however, "*we shall be like Him*," 1 John 3, 2, the image of God being fully restored in us, Ps. 17, 15. Qu. 118.—Here we must still bear the consequences of sin in our lives and in our bodies, such as sickness, anguish, temporal death. But in eternal life, no tear of sorrow or discomfort shall ever dim our eyes. Rev. 21, 4.—In eternal life "*all believers*" will be "*present with Christ . . . and live with Him in . . . joy*." Qu. 205.

4. We shall be with Christ in joy. And our very appearance shall be such as to harmonize with the conditions which shall there surround us, and with the high station which we shall occupy.—We are even here the sons and daughters of God. But this fact is not apparent to men. For instead of the beauty of perfection which is ours through faith, men see in us only poverty, want, weakness, humbleness, sorrow, suffering, and decay. We ourselves feel these keenly, and oftentimes our burdens, the “sufferings of this present time,” Rom. 8, 18, appear overwhelmingly great to us. But in eternity “glory . . . shall be revealed in us.” This glory will be the outward *manifestation* of all that God has made us through Christ, our very appearance and all our attributes being such as are fit for the children of the great and glorious King. And over and above all, there shall be given unto us heavenly radiance, brightness, luster. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Matt. 13, 43. So great will be this glory that the sufferings of this present time, which often seemed overwhelmingly, crushingly great to us in this life, will sink into insignificance in comparison—that they will be seen to be “not worthy to be compared with it.” Rom. 8, 18.—Moreover, while there will be no difference in the joy which shall be the lot of all believers, there will be differing degrees of glory. 1 Cor. 15, 41. 42. While all who enter eternal life will be glorious, the greatest glory will be given to those who have most faithfully served the Lord in this life. 1 Cor. 9, 6.—Thus “all believers . . . shall be with Christ . . . and live with Him in . . . glory.” Qu. 205.

5. This life is called “life everlasting,” Qu. 204, or “eternal life.” John 10, 28. No death shall evermore bring to an end the joy and glory of the believers. Rev. 21, 4. They shall “live with Him in *eternal joy and glory.*” Qu. 205.

Thus life everlasting consists in this, that “*all believers . . . shall be with Christ . . . and live with Him in eternal joy and glory.*” Qu. 205.

b. When eternal life is entered upon.

We have seen from Matt. 10, 28, Qu. 203, that though man’s body may be killed, the soul cannot be killed. It cannot die. When the body dies, the soul leaves it. This is temporal death, namely, the separation of body and soul. The body then sinks into decay. But what becomes of the soul? The soul of the unbeliever, we have seen, at once enters the torments of hell, Luke 16, 23. 24, Qu. 203, being joined in torment by the body at the resurrection. But what about the believer?

1. To the malefactor upon the cross, Jesus said, "*To-day thou shalt be with Me in paradise.*" Luke 23, 43. "*To-day*" the malefactor would die. And when he would die, he was not to pass into a state of insensibility, nor was he to pass into purgatory. He was to be "*in paradise.*" "*Paradise*" is "*with Me,*" that is, heaven, or life everlasting. Thus believers enter into life everlasting "*when they die.*" Qu. 205. Therefore, also, Rev. 14, 13 declares: "*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth,*" from the moment when they die in the Lord. — However, the body of the malefactor died, and shall live again only at the Last Day. Therefore, he did not enter into eternal life according to the body. His soul alone did not die. Hence he was to enter paradise on that day "*according to the soul*" only.—Thus believers, "*when they die,*" are, "*according to the soul, at once present with Christ.*" Qu. 205.

2. But, as we have seen, the body shall not always remain in death, but "*at the Last Day . . . shall be made alive again.*" Qu. 202. In that day the bodies of believers "*shall come forth . . . unto the resurrection of life,*" John 5, 28.29; Qu. 202, "*shall awake . . . to everlasting life,*" Dan. 12, 2. Body and soul, which in death had been separated, shall then be re-united. And as believers shall have been present with Christ according to the soul since they died, they shall "*after the Last Day . . . be with Christ, body and soul.*" Qu. 205.

Thus the Scriptures teach concerning life everlasting "*that all believers, when they die, are, according to the soul, at once present with Christ, and after the Last Day shall be with Christ, body and soul, and live with Him in eternal joy and glory.*" Qu. 205.

## II. TO WHOM LIFE EVERLASTING SHALL BE GIVEN. Qu. 206.

We have already briefly heard to whom life everlasting shall be given. But it is necessary that we should be very clear on this point, lest we ourselves fail to be and to remain in the way of life.

a. From John 10, 27. 28, Qu. 205, we have heard that Christ will give eternal life to His "*sheep,*" and that His sheep are the believers. That it is to believers that eternal life will be given is seen also from John 3, 16. "*Whosoever believeth in Him should . . . have everlasting life.*" Hence eternal life is given "*to . . . believers.*" Qu. 206.—"*Whosoever believeth in Him,*" that is, *every* believer, "*should . . . have everlasting life.*" No believer shall perish. Everlasting life is already become his own. John 3, 36. It is given "*to*

. . . *all* believers." Qu. 206.—But my special joy and comfort in the contemplation of the doctrine of life everlasting consists in this, that, since I believe in Christ, I know that eternal life is given "to *me* and all believers." Qu. 206.—Moreover, since the Holy Ghost works the faith in Christ, through which we become partakers of eternal life, we confess, in the explanation of the Third Article, that "*the Holy Ghost . . . will . . . give unto me and all believers eternal life.*"—Thus eternal life will be given "*to me and all believers.*" Qu. 206.

b. But while it will be given to *all* believers, none but believers shall receive it. John 3, 36.—Nor is it sufficient that at some time or other we have been believers. A whole lifetime of faith will avail us nothing unless we remain in the faith "unto the end." Matt. 24, 13. Wherefore, we have every reason to watch and pray, and to guard our souls, lest we yield to the temptations to infidelity and unbelief, which surround us on every hand. For eternal life shall be given "*to believers only.*" Qu. 206.

Life everlasting shall be given "*to me and all believers, but to believers only.*" Qu. 206.

### III. WHY I MAY PERSONALLY LOOK FOR ETERNAL LIFE WITH ALL CONFIDENCE. Qu. 207.

a. The Scriptures set the promise of eternal life before me.—I say, "*I believe in . . . the life everlasting.*" I am certain that there is for believers a life without end in the presence of Christ. This firm assurance is not based upon conclusions at which the mind of man has arrived; for that would not be *Christian* faith. Moreover, human reason could never offer evidence sufficient to satisfy and convince the heart with regard to eternal bliss, nor could the mind of man comprehend eternal life either with regard to its duration or with regard to the fulness of its joy and glory. But while human reason must fail here, the Word of God assures us that, after death, there is a never-ending life of joy and glory in the presence of Christ for His believers. And knowing that the Word of God can neither err nor lie, I confidently say, "*I believe*"—I believe "*according to the Scriptures.*" Qu. 107.

b. I have, in my own faith, the evidence of God's counsel for *my* salvation—of His purpose which had its beginning in eternity and which shall be fully carried out when I am in eternal life.

1. "*I believe.*" Not others only shall inherit eternal life, but *I* shall enter there.—In Eph. 1, 3—6 St. Paul blesses, that is, praises, God because He "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessing . . . in Christ." He has blessed us in Christ means He has blessed us with these blessings because Christ has won them for us. And these blessings are called "blessings in heavenly places," because they have their abiding fountain in heaven, at the throne of God.—These "spiritual blessings in heavenly places" are afterwards described as consisting in this," that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." He has caused us to be such as love Him, and in this love of God to hate sin and walk before Him according to His will. In other words, these blessings consist in this, that He has caused us to be Christians.—Once more, the "spiritual blessings in heavenly places" are described as consisting in this, that He has given us "the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself," that is, made us His adopted children in Christ Jesus. Again, in other words, these blessings consist in this, that He has caused us to be Christians.—These blessings, namely, that He has given unto us to become Christians, are called "spiritual blessings," because they become ours through the power and workings of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul, therefore, praises God because, through His Holy Spirit, He has made us Christians. And we know what operations the Holy Ghost performs in our hearts in order to make and keep us Christians: By the Gospel, He calls, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps us in the faith.—Moreover, this has not been done in eternity, but after we were born into the world. We say, it has been done "*in time.*" Qu. 307. St. Paul, therefore, blesses God because God has, in time, by the Gospel, called, enlightened, sanctified, and kept us in the faith.—Now, I am a Christian; and therefore, I praise God because "*God has in time, by the Gospel, called, enlightened, sanctified, and kept me in the true faith.*" Qu. 207.

2. This my present state is the result of God's eternal purpose.—St. Paul praises the Lord not only for what He has wrought in us in time; he remembers also what has gone before. The performance of this work in us was not the result, as it were, of some momentary impulse, or a resolve which was formed in time—a purpose which may be changed in the near future. God has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings" in accordance with ("according as") a plan which He had formed "before the foundation of the world," that is, from eternity. "From eternity," "He hath

chosen us," He has "predestinated us," that is, foreordained us, that we should become what He has made us in time. And He has "chosen us in Him," that is, in Christ. In other words, having from eternity seen us in our sin and utter misery, God has from eternity resolved to redeem us through Christ; and having resolved to redeem us, He has resolved to call, enlighten, sanctify, and keep us in the true faith — has "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself."

Nor has He chosen us because He saw, from eternity, any good thing in us, or anything wherein we were better than others, but simply "according to the good pleasure of His will." Again, He wanted to choose us "to the praise of the glory of His grace," in order that His grace might be glorified, and that He might be praised because no worthiness in us, but rather His grace alone prompted Him. — Another word for "to choose" is "to elect." Therefore, this act of God, according to which He has chosen us unto the adoption of children, is called God's *act*, or *decree, of election*. It is also called God's decree of *predestination*, because God has predestinated, or foreordained, us unto the adoption of children. And since His grace alone has prompted Him in this act, the Bible calls it the "*election of grace*." Rom. 11, 5.

Since I am now a child of God, I know that His work also in me is but the carrying out of His eternal purpose, and that "as God has in time, by the Gospel, called, enlightened, sanctified, and kept *me* in the true faith, even so *He has from eternity chosen me unto the adoption of children*." Qu. 207.

3. God's purpose to save me, formed from eternity, will find its full completion in eternity. — By God's election of grace, I am now a child of God. But thereby the full intention and benefit of God's election is not exhausted. — In Rom. 8, 28—30, St. Paul calls Christians "them that love God" and "them who are called according to His purpose," that is, according to His election of grace. He tells us that God did "foreknow" them, that is, chose them before. St. Paul, furthermore, tells us that, whom God did foreknow, "He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." This will be fully accomplished in heaven. Phil. 3, 21; 1 John 3, 2. Hence God has predestinated, or chosen, them "*unto life everlasting*." Qu. 207.

Since I am now a child of God, I should believe that God has chosen me not only unto the adoption of children here in time, but also "*unto life everlasting*." Qu. 207.

4. Finally, God has not only decreed all this, but He will also most certainly carry out His decree to its full performance in eternity.—Having predestinated us, He calls us and justifies us, and finally glorifies us. Rom. 8, 30. This is as certain as though it had already occurred; “them He also glorified.” Nothing shall change this conclusion. True, Satan, the world, and my flesh will assail me. I may be hounded and persecuted for my faith’s sake. My heart may often bleed, and anguish and grief may choke me. And those who cause it may seem to triumph. Yet their shout of victory shall be hushed. When sin and hell and every grief and affliction have done their worst, when the enemies of my soul, the haters of my very life, the furies of fire and tempest, have vented all their venom on me and see me writhing apparently helpless in the dust, they have not harmed me at all. “All things,” yea, “all things,” must work together for good to me, must be the means, under God’s government, to hasten on that blessed end which God has from eternity decreed for me. He has chosen me; I am His own; I am ever in His hand; “and no man shall pluck me out of His hand.” Qu. 207.

5. This revelation is given for Christians only. In all places in which the Bible speaks of it, it speaks about the children of God, and to the children of God. Why not to others? Because this is Gospel, and the Gospel only, which deals neither of nor with unbelievers, or such as are not earnestly concerned about their souls’ salvation.—But such as cry for safety amid the storm-waves of sin and spiritual adversity should hear this glorious message and take heart.

And since I am God’s child, knowing full well my sin, my utter helplessness, that heavenly message is for me. And since God has sent it to me, “I am firmly to believe” it. Qu. 207.

“According to the Scriptures, I am firmly to believe that, as God has in time, by the Gospel, called, enlightened, sanctified, and kept me in the true faith, even so He has from eternity chosen me unto the adoption of children and unto life everlasting, and no man shall pluck me out of His hand.” Qu. 207.

And therefore I confess not only, “I believe,” but rather, “I believe in . . . the life everlasting.”

CONCLUSION.—When we began the discussion of the Creed, we spoke the words, “I believe.” We have at each step paused to ponder the plenitude of grace and mercy. We have, moreover, made sure that we were following no mere chimera, but the bright star of God’s Word, which leads most

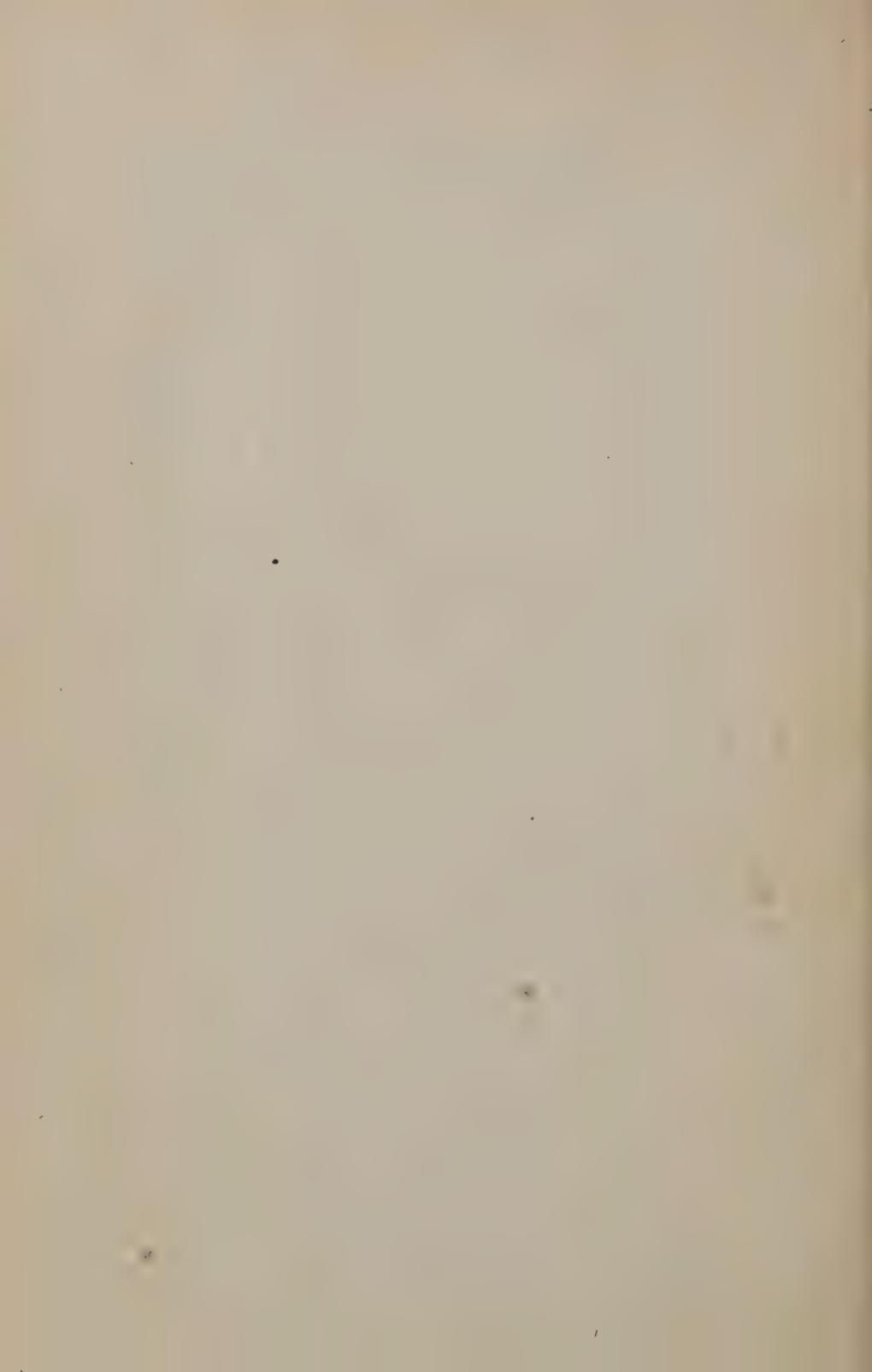
certainly to our desired destination. As our lips have confessed, our hearts have found it written in the Book of everlasting truth. Hence with joy and peace of heart we say, "Amen," "this is most certainly true."

Lord, with glowing heart I'd praise Thee  
For the bliss Thy love bestows,  
For the pardoning grace that saves me,  
And the peace that from it flows.  
Help, O God, my weak endeavor,  
This dull soul to rapture raise;  
Thou must light the flame, or never  
Can my love show forth Thy praise.

Praise, my soul, the God that sought thee,  
Wretched wand'rer, far astray;  
Found thee lost, and kindly brought thee  
From the path of death away.  
Praise, with love's devoutest feeling,  
Him, who saw thy guilt-born fear,  
And, the light of hope revealing,  
Bade the blood-stained Cross appear.

Lord, this bosom's ardent feeling  
Vainly would my lips express;  
Low before Thy footstool/ kneeling,  
Deign Thy suppliant's prayer to bless.  
Let Thy grace, my soul's chief treasure,  
Love's pure flame within me raise;  
And since words can never measure,  
Let my life show forth Thy praise,

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